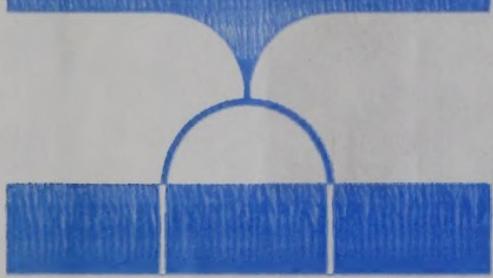


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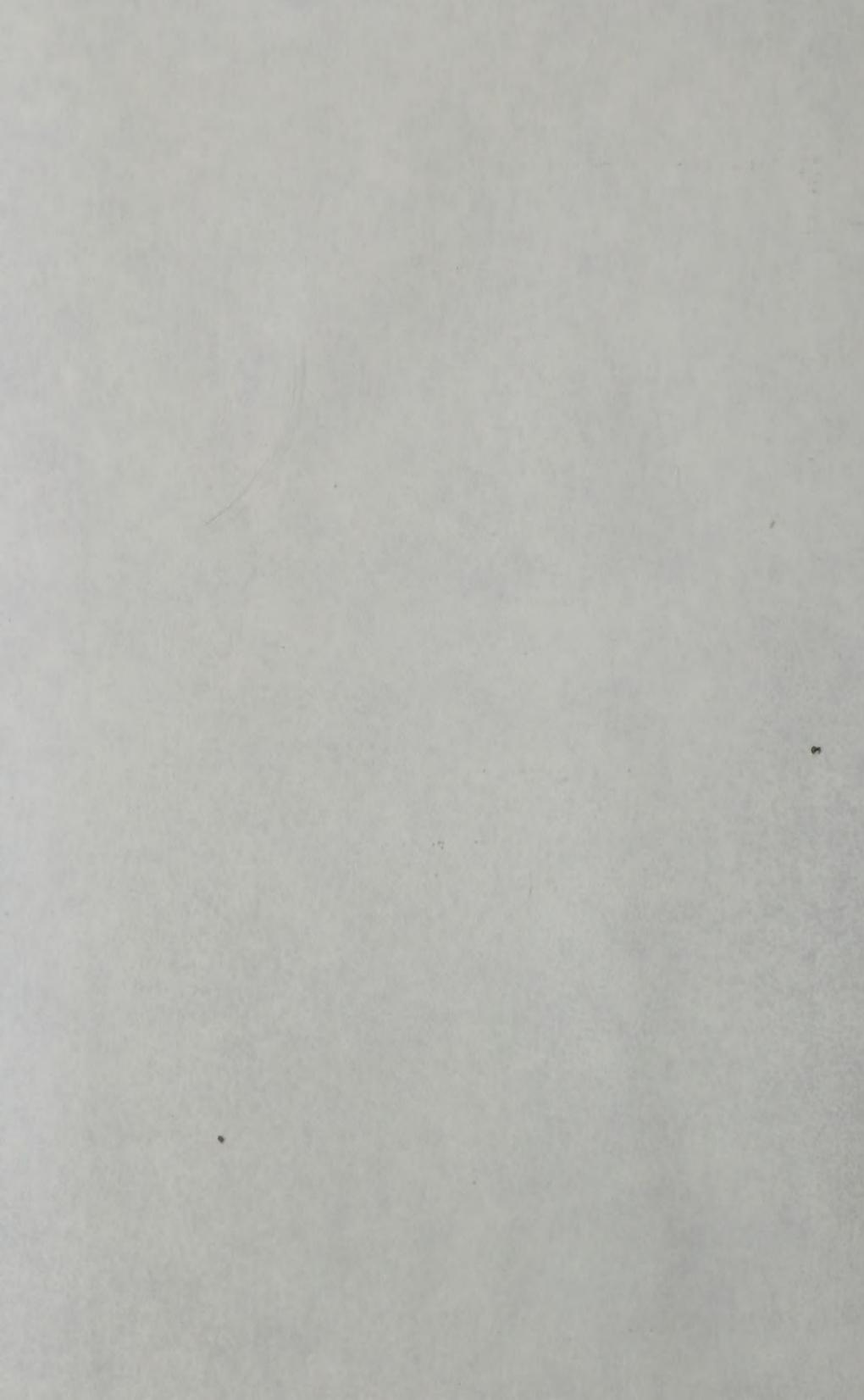
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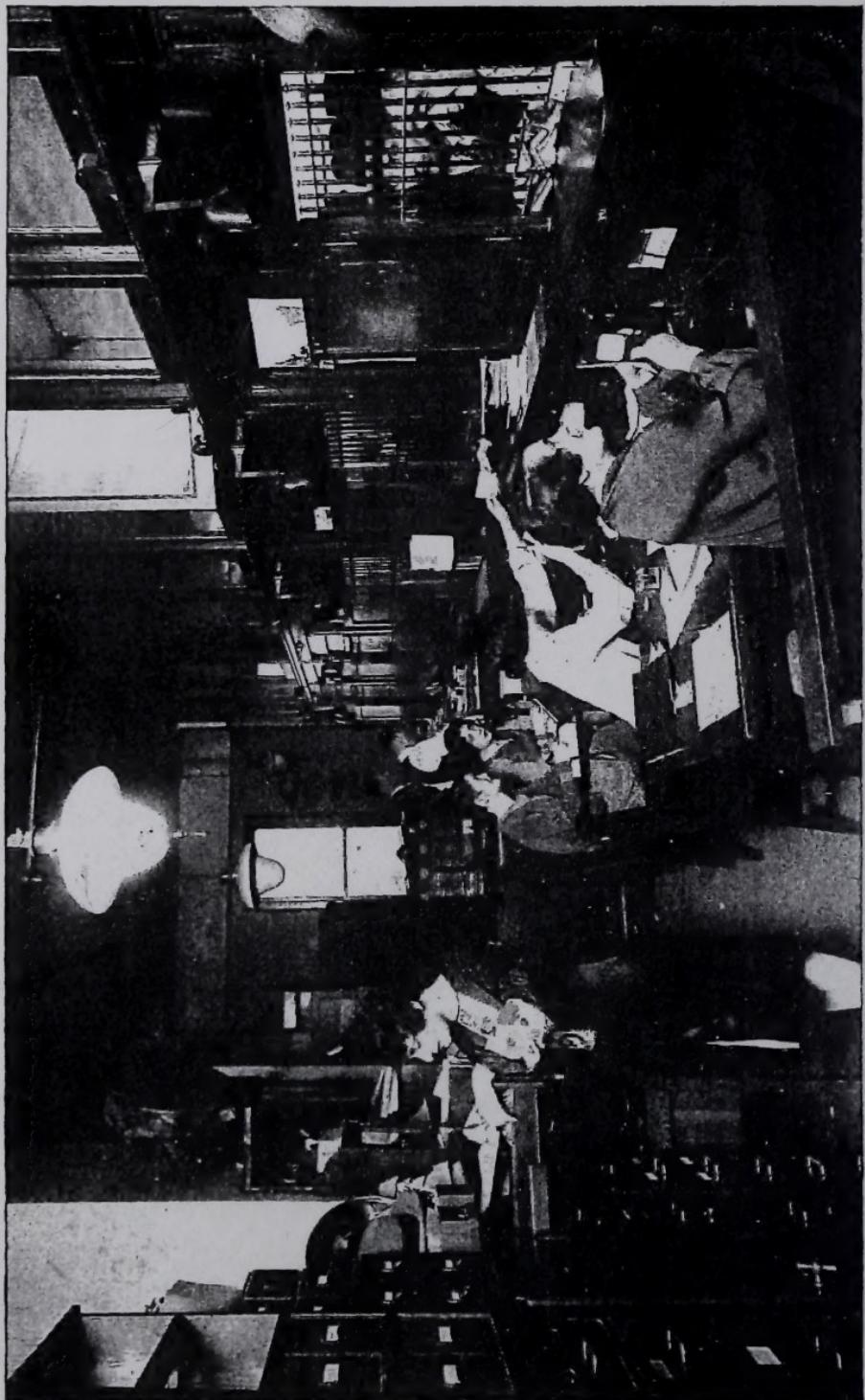
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OFFICE AND CLERICAL STAFF OF LOCAL 10

A HISTORY
OF THE
Amalgamated
Garment Cutters' Union
**THE AMALGAMATED
LADIES' GARMENT CUTTERS' UNION
LOCAL 10**

A HISTORY
of the
**Amalgamated Ladies'
Garment Cutters' Union**

LOCAL 10

AFFILIATED WITH
The International Ladies' Garment
Workers' Union

By JAMES ONEAL
Author of
*The Workers in American History and
American Communism*



New York
LOCAL 10
1927

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By the AMALGAMATED LADIES' GARMENT CUTTERS' UNION, LOCAL 10

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Washington, D. C.

February 18, 1927.

Mr. David Dubinsky, Manager.
Local 10, International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union,
New York, New York.

Dear Sir and Brother:

Devotion to principles and loyalty to a cause are characteristics greatly to be admired in individuals and in organizations. These qualities have been demonstrated by the Officers and Members of Local Union No. 10, International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union. The record of this Local Union, during the twenty-five years of its existence, shows that it has been active in its support of trade-union principles and policies, as formulated by the American Federation of Labor. The progress which has been made, during the past twenty-five years, in the elimination of the sweat-shop and sweat-shop conditions, and in the advancement of the economic, social and industrial conditions stands as evidence of the virtue, strength and efficiency of organized labor and organized effort.

May the future unfold its opportunities for advancement and social progress and may the efficiency and power of Local Union No. 10 be increased so that through cooperative effort and collective action the living standards of the workers and their families may be advanced to a still higher plane.

With Fraternal Greetings, I am

,Very truly yours,

John Green
President,
AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE AND GREETINGS

It is with a profound sense of gratification that the Executive Board of Local 10 has been able to publish this history of the organization for the membership. To make the occasion of the celebration of its twenty-five years of existence a memorable one, neither money nor effort has been spared to make this history of our local the most thorough one of its kind that has been published in this country. In this work will be found a record of the early beginnings of unionism among cutters, the trials, struggles, sacrifices, defeats and victories of the members; the problems of the union and of the industry, the expansion and development of the union, its various structural changes, and something of the men who have served the members during this past quarter of a century, as well as the battles waged by a loyal membership to make life more worth living for them and their families.

This is a historic occasion in the annals of Local 10's history. The members are celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the union after a period of storm and stress, the recent cloak strike and the subsequent internal conflict in our International Union, testing our union in a manner that few organizations have ever been tried. Our members have been confronted with problems in the industry and in the union that were grave and in some instances menaced the very life of the union. Thanks to the long training, discipline and solidarity of the membership, Local 10 has not only maintained its position but has served as an inspiration and en-

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

couragement to its sister locals, so that today, as in the past, it is regarded as one of the most influential and powerful locals of our International.

We were fortunate in having secured for the task of writing this book, including the gathering of widely scattered material and data, Mr. James Oneal, a lifelong student of the Labor movement and the author of *The Workers in American History* and *American Communism*. We are also grateful for the assistance rendered by Mr. Harry Lang, former labor editor of the Jewish *Daily Forward*, who compiled valuable data and other information for the book from old sources and records. Our sincere thanks are due to Mr. Morris Kolchin, statistician of the Bureau of Research of Governor Smith's Advisory Commission in the Cloak and Suit Industry, for information and assistance he gave us, and, likewise, to Mr. F. Nathan Wolf, chief auditor of our International, for having helped to prepare the financial tables.

Those members of our union who joined it after 1910 and who today compose the large majority of our membership, will, we are confident, read with absorbing interest the early chapters of this book, which tell the story of the pioneer days in our trade and in our organization and deal with the problems with which the builders of our union were confronted and their incessant efforts to gain a foothold in the industry. And as they compare them with the later chapters, which recall events with which they are familiar and scenes and struggles of which they themselves were eye-witnesses or participants in, our readers will gain a clear and complete picture of the union as it is today and as a product of the historic events that shaped and moulded it.

On the other hand, those who joined in the nineties or in the early years of nineteen hundred and who are still mem-

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bers of our union will, with no less appreciation, review the history of the pioneer days of the various cutters' organizations which they themselves helped to create and develop and for which they fought and struggled.

While the privilege has fallen upon us to celebrate this momentous occasion on such a lavish scale, we cannot close this greeting to the living without paying tribute to the noble men who have passed on and whose names and glorious labors contributed to the building of Local 10. Their memory is preserved in this record. They are a source of inspiration to the living, who are today being called upon to carry on the battle for the progress and welfare of our union, and an assurance that the ideals of trade unionism are as enduring as life itself.

EXECUTIVE BOARD,
AMALGAMATED LADIES' GARMENT
CUTTERS' UNION, LOCAL 10, I.L.G.W.U.

New York City, March 26, 1927.

FOREWORD

When the writer was approached last March by Officials of Local 10 and asked if he would consider writing a history of the union he hesitated. The volume was to be ready for delivery to the members by December 12. At the utmost this gave but eight months for research, interviewing members, digesting convention proceedings, consulting minutes of the union, pawing over files of *Justice* and the *Ladies' Garment Cutter*, reading numerous undated broadsides, leaflets, manifestos and other material. All this would have been formidable enough if the author could have given his full time to it, but this was not the case. Editing a weekly publication, he could give only his spare time each day to the book—Sundays and holidays more fully. Only an intense interest in American economic history induced him to accept the assignment.

As the work progressed a new difficulty arose. Local 10 became involved in the strike of the cloakmakers on July 1 and its chief executive officers, Mr. David Dubinsky and Mr. Sam B. Shenker, had to give first consideration to the strike. Information which he wanted and which they were eager to give could not be obtained. There were delays due to the strike and to avoid loss of time at least the outlines of some chapters were written out of their chronological order. Due to this method of working errors unavoidably crept into the original drafts and this required considerable revision. When it is remembered that the writer has had to also typewrite every page of the manuscript some idea of the difficulties under which he has labored will be appreciated.

Still another difficulty may be mentioned. While much of the material consulted consisted of printed sources, most of the early sources consisted of minutes often difficult to

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read. This is especially true of the minutes of the Gotham Knife Cutters and of the United Cloak and Suit Cutters. Even when easily read important actions were sometimes recorded too briefly to understand the full import of what was done. Then there were months—in some cases years—in which the records were fragmentary. When consulting "old timers" in an attempt to fill in some gap, the writer also found that their recollections were frequently confused. Because of this experience the author had to be cautious in accepting reminiscences.

The writer wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness to many members and officials who have helped him in one way or another. I am under special obligations to Mr. David Dubinsky and Mr. Sam B. Shenker without whose advice it would have been impossible to complete the volume. They have also saved me from the commission of many errors and their detailed knowledge of the modern history of the industry and the union has helped me at every stage of the work. I am also especially indebted to Mr. Harry Lang who has drawn upon Abraham Cahan's *Reminiscences: Pages From My Life*, a work which is rich in recollections of the Yiddish labor movement. Mr. Morris Kolchin of the Bureau of Research of the Cloak, Suit and Skirt Industry of New York City also volunteered invaluable data. Special mention is also due Mr. F. Nathan Wolf for the tables of receipts and expenditures that appear in the Appendix. Among others whose generous aid is entitled to special mention are Mr. Jesse Cohen, Mr. Nicholas Jagoe who provided some rare documents, and Miss Fannia Cohen, who has been helpful with important suggestions. I may add that the chart in the Appendix showing the evolution of cutters' unions in the ladies' garment industry in New York City is my own. Other acknowledgments will be found in the footnotes.

JAMES ONEAL.

Richmond Hill, N. Y.

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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUNDS

The origin and development of institutions is a story as interesting as any ever told. To observe the simple beginnings of what in a later period will affect the lives of millions of human beings; to trace the causes and forces that have shaped an organization, a government, a political party; to observe it expand, change its character, modify or enlarge its purposes; to acquaint ourselves with the human ideals, sacrifices, hopes and disappointments that accompany this evolution of a given institution; above all, to understand what has occurred is to adapt ourselves to the changing institution and equip ourselves for the task of effecting other changes that may be necessary for our welfare.

The Amalgamated Ladies' Garment Cutters' Union, Local 10, like many other local trade unions, may trace its descent as an organization from the early forms of American trade unionism while the tailor as a worker may trace his economic kinship back to the colonial jack-of-

all-trades who was not only a tailor, but a tanner, shoemaker, carpenter, farmer and other craftsmen.

The scope of this work will not permit any attempt to present the general history of the garment industry or of the cutter. It will be sufficient to sketch a few important backgrounds to show the continuity of both in the economic history of the United States. The first stage of the garment industry, like many other industries, was the family stage when household manufacturing was the rule. Among the occupations carried on in the home, in addition to the ordinary work of cooking, etc., Miss Salmon mentions every form of spinning and weaving cotton, wool and flax, carpet weaving and making, upholstering, knitting, tailoring, the making of boots, shoes, hats, gloves, collars, cuffs, men's underclothing, quilts, comfortables, mattresses and pillows; also the making of soap, starch, candles, yeast, perfumes, medicines, liniments, crackers, cheese, coffee-browning, the drying of fruits and vegetables, and salting and pickling meat.¹

An advance beyond this stage was made when either an outsider was hired or raw materials or semi-finished products were sent to an outsider to be made into the finished article. In this case the tailor, for example, either came into

¹*Domestic Service*, p. 9.

a home and made the garments desired or he took the cloth to his own home and made them. This tailor became known as an itinerant worker. That is, he worked for no particular person very long and he was always "on the go." His work supplemented the work done in the household of those who employed him and thus relieved the family of so much labor.

About the same time the shop stage of production developed and in time it replaced the itinerant stage. The itinerant tailor became a handcraftsman working in a shop. He might own the shop, he might rent it, or it might be a room in his own home. What is important is that he ceased to wander from one household to another. He became a worker in a certain shop. Occasionally work was sent out from the shops to families. The tailor furnished the raw materials and tools as well as his labor. As his little business increased he employed other tailors who often lived with the master tailor's family. Increasing business made the shop develop into a manufactory, a sort of enlarged shop which in many industries developed into the factory.

But to return to the shop. The proprietors "accepted for pay raw wool, hides, lard, feathers, pork, bacon, or in fact anything the farmers had to offer." In time the tailor came to employ apprentices and at this stage we have

the beginnings of the division between capitalist and laborer, one who owns the tools of production and the other who sells his labor power for a living to the owner. So long as the master tailor worked by the side of his help the line of division between the owner of the shop and the hired workers was not distinct or, at least, not important. What happened to the tailor happened to the weaver, the shoemaker and many other workers as one occupation after the other was drawn out of the household into the shop and as the shop gradually evolved into the factory.²

In all the foregoing stages of handicraft production there was no division of labor into cloakmakers, cutters, operators, pressers and so on. This division along lines of special skill came at a later period. Most of the tailors down almost to the end of the eighteenth century were indentured servants. That is, they were bound in service for a term of years to a master and the latter often hired them out for odd jobs of tailoring. For example, in the seventeenth century Luke Mathews, a British tailor, was bound to serve Thomas Landon of Virginia for two years. He received six pence per day when working for Landon's family, but when for other persons, he was entitled to only one-half the proceeds of his labor. The remuneration of the

²Tryon, *Household Manufactures in the United States*, pp. 242-248.

Virginia tailor was generally paid in tobacco. Early in the century a Virginia tailor received 70 pounds of tobacco for making seven women's jackets and another received 60 pounds of tobacco for making a woman's coat.¹ In New England about this same period there were fewer indentured servants than in the South and the wages of tailors and other handicraftsmen were fixed by law.

Not until the first quarter of the nineteenth century do we find the beginnings of the modern garment establishment and the appearance of the modern tailor, no longer a bond servant, bargaining for the price of his labor power. This is also the period of the organization of tailors and other workers, first as benefit societies and then as trade unions as the distinction between capitalist and worker became more pronounced. Wholesale manufacture began in New York in 1833 and the following year the tailors were involved in a strike for six months. Twenty strikers were convicted of "conspiracy" and fined. In passing sentence Judge Edwards denounced the trade unions as of "foreign origin" and said that "we are at a loss to know what degree of severity may be necessary to rid society of them." Over 25,000 people attended a mass meeting in City Hall Park to protest against

¹Bruce, *Economic History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century*, 11, pp. 472-473.

the sentence and adopted resolutions to form "a separate and distinct party, around which the laboring classes and their friends can rally with confidence."⁴

In the same year we may observe the appearance of a problem, equitable division of work, that has concerned cutters in recent years. The journeymen tailors of New York endeavored to force each employer to keep a record of each journeyman as he took out a job. No one was to take a job "out of his turn, and no one to have a second job until all had been supplied."⁵ How successful the tailors were in enforcing this rule we do not know. The financial crisis of 1837 destroyed many trade unions and prostrated others and it was several years before there was a revival of organization.

In 1850 New York tailors were again conspicuous when in July they became involved in a strike for a scale of wages and a strict union shop. The employers obtained immigrant strikebreakers and they were aided by many arrests of strikers made by the police. A City Industrial Congress was called to meet in City Hall Park to aid in establishing a cooperative clothing store for the German and English branches of tailors. The idea of cooperative

⁴Commons and Associates, *History of Labor in the United States*, 1, pp. 408-412.

⁵Commons, etc., *Ibid.*, p. 339.

production issued out of the strike and 110 delegates attended the Congress. Although the proposal was approved, little financial aid was given to realize it.¹

It is evident that by the middle of the nineteenth century the industry in New York had developed to that stage where the distinction between the owners of industry and the workers had produced the modern trade union. The organized workers in the trade had also considered political action and cooperative production, and although they had not ventured into these fields the fact that these forms of action had been considered shows that the modern type of trade union in the garment trades had matured in this period.

The sewing machine was invented in 1846 and it revolutionized production. In fact, the beginning of the manufacture of clothing on a large scale appears about 1850. As the trade unions raised the standard of living the demand for clothing and especially for women's dress goods increased. As establishments were enlarged division of labor began to appear. As early as 1820 an "Emigrant's Directory," giving advice to tailors, declared that a man who could "cut out will be occasionally well paid," while Pope quotes an advertisement in the New York

¹Ibid., pp. 551-557.

²Abbott, *Women in Industry*, p. 218.

Herald of 1842 announcing a ready-made clothing establishment that "keeps a special cutter for orders."⁸

Cutting as a craft, however, was not general at this period but following the introduction of the sewing machine large quantities of ready-made clothing were cut in manufacturing establishments to be finished in homes of the workers. This indicates some specialization in cutting. By 1864 the cutter had emerged as a distinct craftsman. Writing twenty years ago of the division of labor into cutting, sponging and other processes, Pope emphasizes the increasing skill required of the cutter who "became differentiated from the mass of journeymen" and who often "rose to the position of the large master."⁹

The same writer asserts that "In the early period of the industry women were often employed as cutters, in the manufacture of both men's and women's clothing" but that employment of women as cutters declined and completely disappeared.¹⁰ As Pope presented no evidence of employment of women in this craft Miss Abbott denied that they were employed as such. She points out that the "Thirteenth Annual Report of the United States

⁸Pope, *The Clothing Industry in New York*, p. 12.

⁹Pope, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 28.

Bureau of Labor" on "Hand and Machine Labor" reported that "The cutting was done by males under both methods (hand and machine)."¹¹ The latest study of the ladies' garment industry is that of Levine. Writing of the period 1860-1880 he says that "Women were employed not only as finishers, but also as machine operators and cutters." This appears to be a reasonable conclusion considering that a majority of the workers in the industry were women.¹²

Like other workers in the industry, the cutters' hours of labor were excessively long and most of the evils associated with the manufacture of ladies' garments such as sweating, jobbing, subcontracting, etc., had already appeared at this period. The wages of cutters averaged as follows:

1860	\$13.92 a week
1872	19.85 a week
1878	16.00 a week

Estimated on a basis of eight months employment during the year the yearly wage of cutters was:

¹¹Abbott, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

¹²Levine, *The Women's Garment Workers*, p. 9.

Cutters	Yearly income
1860	\$445.44
1872	635.20
1878	512.00 ["]

For the larger history of the ladies' garment industry and general organization of the workers and their problems, including the cutters, the reader may turn to Levine's "The Women's Garment Workers." We now have to turn to a consideration of the parent organization of Local 10 and others that preceded it.

["]Pope, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-35: The data on wages in general for the ladies' garment industry are fragmentary and if the United States Bureau of Labor reported no ladies' garment cutters, as Miss Abbott contends, the above estimates refer mainly to the men's clothing cutters and they must be accepted with caution. There is some confusion on this point as the reader will observe on the preceding page, but a number of old time cutters have assured the writer that they personally knew of women cutters in the decade of the '80's.

CHAPTER II

THE GOTHAM KNIFE CUTTERS' ASSOCIATION

On Thanksgiving Day, 1869, Uriah S. Stephens, a Philadelphia cutter, called eight friends together and organized the first unit of a labor organization that was to make history. Stephens had been educated for the Baptist ministry, had taught school for a time, and then turned to tailoring. He was a member of a garment cutters union which had been organized in 1862 or 1863 but had reached the conclusion that open organization by workers was a failure and that secret organization was necessary. Assembly No. 1 of the Noble Order of the Knights of Labor was founded.

In 1883 the Knights of Labor had about 52,000 members throughout the country and in January, 1884, the Gotham Knife Cutters' Association of New York and Vicinity was chartered by the Knights of Labor as Local Assembly 3038. It was a mixed local and the parent organization of what is now the Amalgamated Ladies' Garment Cutters' Union, Local 10. In

1886 it granted a charter to the cutters in the cloak and suit shops, who organized the United Cloak and Suit Cutters' Association.*

Unfortunately what information we have of the early years of Local Assembly 3038 is fragmentary. The preliminary meetings of the cutters who organized this K. or L. local were held in the home of Edward J. Pierce at 137 Charles Street. Pierce was the father of John F. Pierce who later became one of the most active members of the local, and of Local 10. The minutes of the local from January 27 to December 15, 1884; July 1, 1887, to May 25, 1888; and from June 1, 1889, to September 12, 1890, are the only official records that are available but these are rich in suggestion.

The violence of the Molly Maguires in the late '60's and '70's, the fears left by the Paris Commune of 1871, and the widespread disorders accompanying the great railroad strike of 1877

*Levine in *The Women's Garment Workers*, pp. 33-34, states that Gotham was organized in 1883 and the suit cutters in 1884. Both dates appear to be errors. An old membership card in the possession of "Dolly" Levine reads: "United Suit and Cloak Cutters Benevolent Association. Organized February 1, 1886." A constitution of the Gotham Knife Cutters received from Nicholas Jagoe and amended in 1901 carries the following inscription: "Organized January 24, 1884."

Another union known as the Beehive Cutters had appeared either before or about the same time that Gotham organized. Its members were underwear cutters. This independent union amalgamated with Gotham about 1886. I am indebted to "Dolly" Levine also for this information.

compelled the Knights of Labor to give up its secrecy in 1878 so that Local Assembly 3038 was founded in the period of open organization in the sense that its general purposes were known. The initiation ceremony was a compound of religious ritual, mysticism, and faith in the power of labor. Each assembly had no less than sixteen officers, including a Master Workman, Venerable Sage, Almoner, Unknown Knight and Judge Advocate, to mention only a few.

The modern cutter may imagine the solemn scene of inducting a candidate into membership from the following instructions for the opening service:

A Globe being placed on the outside of the Outer Veil; a copy of the Sacred Scriptures closed, and a box or basket, containing blank cards on a triangular Altar, red in color, in the centre of the vestibule; a Lance on the outside of the Inner Veil, or entrance to the Sanctuary, over the wicket; that the initiated may know that an Assembly of the ***** are in session.

The place of meeting is known as the "Sanctuary." The Assistant Unknown Knight meets the candidate in the vestibule and is questioned:

A. U. K. Do you believe in God, the Creator and Universal Father of All?

Candidate. I do.

A. U. K. Do you obey the Universal Ordinance of God, in gaining your bread by the sweat of your brow?

Candidate. I do.

There is much more to the ceremony, including a solemn vow to be true to the principles of the organization, before the Master Workman announces that the applicant has been covered "with the shield of our Brotherhood." He is then taken before the Worthy Foreman for a lecture and again to the Master Workman who instructs the new member in the signs and symbols of the organization.¹ Every meeting in the "Sanctuary" of the Gotham Cutters was a scene of this quaint initiation ceremony.

In the first year that we have any record of this local, 1884, it was weak in membership and funds. The membership is not indicated but a report for the last quarter of the year shows receipts of \$159.95, a little over \$50 a month. Among the trade matters considered were the use of the big knife in some shops, overtime, wages, quantity of work and closer cooperation with the clothing cutters. At each meeting a short lecture was delivered either by a member or by some outside person who was invited. On July 11 a speaker spoke on the evil of the big

¹The initiation ceremony may be found in *Documentary History of American Industrial Society*, X, pp. 19-24.

knife and on October 24 a resolution was adopted against its use.

In 1883 several shops were organized as the Dress and Cloakmakers' Union as the result of a strike in a number of "inside" shops which involved 750 men and women. This strike occurred in July and it was not till the following month that the Gotham Knife Cutters was organized. A general upheaval of strikes all over the country showed a general dissatisfaction among the workers, especially in 1884, and the idea of a closer alliance and mutual aid developed as appeals for aid reached the Gotham Knife Cutters. The local taxed its members five cents each per month in June and July to aid striking iron workers at Albany and collected \$85.45 the following November to help the striking miners in the Hocking Valley of Ohio.

In November the need of an alliance of New York cutters was recognized. In that month the Gotham Knife Cutters conferred with the clothing cutters, the secretary of that organization saying that a delegate body should be organized "to act in the interest of each in trade matters" and that "each organization should be governed by the same constitution and by-laws." In December a delegate of an organization of dry goods workers also suggested an alliance on the ground that the interests of the respective organizations were closely allied. What became of the pro-

posed alliance of the cutters is not known as it was considered late in the year and we have no record of the following year.

In 1885 the entire cloak trade was convulsed by a general strike. Jewish immigrants had already entered the industry and participated in the strike which lasted two weeks. The bosses were organized as the Cloak Manufacturers' Association and an agreement was reached by arbitration. No documents are available to determine what part the Gotham Knife Cutters played in this strike. The years 1885 and 1886 witnessed the beginnings of organization in "outside shops" and in the later year the cloakmakers were again on strike for the abolition of sweatshops and the contracting system. The Cloak and Suit Cutters Association supported the claim of the manufacturers that the contracting system could not be abolished².

No by-laws of the Gotham Knife Cutters of this period have been preserved but in November and December, 1887, the "Sanctuary" considered amendments to the by-laws and from the minutes of these meetings we are able to reconstruct in part the rules established by the members. The Executive Committee consisted of seven members, including the President, Vice-President, Recording Secretary, Statistician, and

²For strikes in this period the reader should consult Levine, *The Women's Garment Workers*, Chap. VI.

three members elected semi-annually. The Executive Committee was given power to settle grievances between members and employers and report grievances and "statements of employers" to the association. It summoned members to appear before it, enforced its orders and decisions of the association, examined all applicants for membership, and no strike was valid unless it received the unanimous approval of the executive. Complaints or communications to the executive by members in arrears could not be considered until such members settled their account in full with the association.

Members disagreeing with a boss were required to notify the Executive Committee whose instructions in the matter became mandatory. Trade differences were also to be submitted to the executive and members leaving a shop were required to notify the executive so that vacancies could be filled by other members. No member was permitted to teach any person to be a cutter without the consent of the association and members violating this rule were fined \$5 for each week or fraction of a week that the rule was violated. No person was eligible as an apprentice unless continually employed one year in the shop where he was to serve. Apprentices were to serve three years. Apprentices could be granted at the request of an employer but it required a three-fourths vote "of the assembly" to grant the

request. No strikes could be ordered without first making an attempt at a settlement. Shop chairmen in struck shops were required to give the Financial Secretary the names of striking members and no others could obtain strike benefits without the special order of the executive.

What amount of strike benefits was paid is not known as there is a curious omission in the minutes. It was proposed to pay \$10 per week to married men and \$7 to single men. Two amendments were offered and they were defeated together with the original motion. This left the amount as fixed by the old by-laws and these are unknown. On the whole there are many striking resemblances between these early rules and those of Local 10 in recent years.

The Gotham Knife Cutters in the fourth year of its existence was still a weak organization although its finances had considerably improved. At the end of the year, 1887, there were 127 members in good standing and in the last six months the receipts were \$1,802.11 and the expenditures \$1,743.94.

In July, 1887, the operators and "ironers" in the shop of R. K. Davies were locked out and the available records of this struggle show that it continued for at least nine months with the support of the Gotham Knife Cutters. In the first month of the strike the cutters voted the locked

out men \$10 per week and later in the month assessed each member \$2 for the same purpose. In August District Alliance 49 of the Knights of Labor voted to give \$3 to each striker and the cutters decided to hold a picnic and give the proceeds to the same cause. In the same month the cutters voted to assess their members \$1 each week to the end of the strike but in the following month it was evident that sentiment was wavering because of the belief that the strikers could not win. The last assessment was rescinded in September but in the following week another assessment of \$3 was levied. At the last meeting in this same month all available funds of the cutters were voted to the strikers. Sympathy and aid were extended till March, 1888, when reference to the Davies' lockout disappears from the records. The support given by the Gotham Knife Cutters in this struggle is an inspiring example of solidarity.

The decade of the '80's brought a considerable number of Jewish workers into the industry but Americanized Jews were among the first to enter the cutting trade. They had an advantage over recent immigrants in that they understood and read English, although poorly. Their customs, habits and ways of living were strange to the Americans. There was also the difference of religion. These factors brought an undercurrent of conflict with American workers which

became enhanced by a divergence of political opinions.

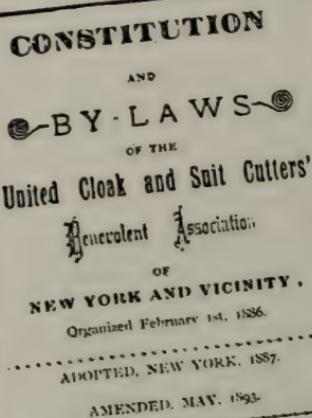
Before the '80's the Jewish immigrants as a rule took little interest in political questions but the immigrants of the '80's displayed considerable interest in Socialism. This was due to the activities of the Jewish revolutionary intellectuals who arrived from Russia. The Jewish workers were much interested in the Henry George campaign in 1886, attended meetings, and contributed much enthusiasm. The American unions were also united in support of George for Mayor through the Central Labor Union. The Jewish revolutionary intellectuals decided that the economic struggle must be supplemented with the political struggle because capitalists were able to destroy many gains made by the unions whose motto was, "economic struggle only." Samuel Gompers threw himself into the campaign with ardor. The Socialists, also, gave themselves heart and soul to the campaign. George was the author of *Progress and Poverty*, a follower of Leo Tolstoy, the Russian novelist and philosopher, and was then at the height of his popularity. His theory was based on the view that poverty could be abolished by repealing all taxes and have the government tax all land values, thus freeing land from speculative ownership and, as George believed, freeing labor at the same time.

Socialists were skeptical of George's theory and so was Gompers but both supported him not because of his theory but because he was leading a political struggle of the organized workers.* Drawn into the common cause in this campaign the American unions and Jewish immigrants worked in harmony but a breach appeared later when the latter fell under the influence of the Socialists and Anarchists of the revolutionary movement in Russia.

It was difficult to reach the Jewish masses with propaganda for trade union organization. There was no Jewish press to speak of. *Die Gazetten*, an orthodox weekly, was the only Yiddish organ which later expanded into the *Tageblatt*, a Yiddish daily, also with orthodox tendencies. Both paid more attention to Jewish religious matters than to other affairs and yet there were dreams of a Yiddish press, a labor and Socialist press, in the Jewish quarter. Abraham Cahan and a few of his comrades were the principal dreamers. With him was Bernard Weinstein, later the secretary of the United Hebrew Trades which he held for years. He was responsible for calling Jewish workers to meetings where they were organized into Jewish

*Gompers, *Seventy Years of Life and Labor*, I, Chap. xv., Abraham Cahan, editor of *The Forward*, in his *Reminiscences: Pages From My Life*, presents the same view of this period and of the Henry George campaign.

EARLY CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED CLOAK AND SUIT CUTTERS' ASSOCIATION



J.W. BEALE & SON, PRINTERS,
108 CHURCH ST., N.Y.

PREAMBLE

We, the Cloak and Suit Cutters of New York and vicinity, having formed ourselves into an Association for Social, Benevolent and Protective purposes - to secure a preference for our Members over all others wherever there is work to be done at Cloak and Suit Cutting, putting them at work the soonest and keeping them at work the longest, to alleviate the condition of our worthy Members upon whom sickness or other misfortune may come; to protect them in their just rights without infringing the just rights of others, and to make such provision as will obtain for them decent burial when they die - do hereby ordain and adopt the following Constitution and Laws for our government.

CONSTITUTION.

ARTICLE I.—NAME.

The name of this Association shall be THE UNITED CLOAK AND SUIT CUTTERS of New York and vicinity.

ARTICLE II.—OFFICERS.

SECTION 1. The Officers shall be a President, two Vice-Presidents, a Financial Secretary, a General Secretary, a Treasurer, a Sergeant-at-Arms, and Five Trustees.

Sec. 2. The Officers shall be elected by ballot annually, at the last meeting in April.

Sec. 3. One of the two Vice Presidents shall be a German by birth or descent, and capable of translating the proceedings into the German language when necessary.

ARTICLE III.—COMMITTEES.

Sec. 1. On the night of his installation, or as soon thereafter as practicable, the President shall appoint the following Committees, viz : a Finance Committee of three members, a Law Committee of three members, a Membership Committee of seven members, and an Executive Committee of seven members.

Sec. 2. The Finance Committee shall serve for a term of one year.

Sec. 3. The Law Committee shall serve for a term of one year.

Provision for the application for membership, and give such other information to the Membership Committee as will enable them to report to the Association on the candidate's eligibility for membership.

Sec. 3. If less than ten, or more than three black balls be cast against the admission of a candidate his case shall lie over for further investigation by the Membership Committee, and any member having a valid objection against the admission of such candidate, shall appear before the Membership Committee, who shall report at the next meeting. Any failure on the part of the members who have deposited such black balls, appearing before the Committee, they shall report same.

and have known the applicant to have wronged a Cloak Cutter for three years preceding the date of said application.

Sec. 6. Any member who shall violate this law shall be fined Twenty-five dollars for the first offense, and for the second be expelled from the Union.

ARTICLE V.—APPRENTICES.

SECTION 1. The Association shall not give its sanction to the employment of more than one apprentice for each shop, and then only when it can be shown

unions. In 1886 Cahan, assisted by Charles Chamrayevsky (later Dr. Rayevsky) published a Yiddish weekly, *Die Neue Zeit* (*The New Times*). Rayevsky was a factory worker and Cahan a teacher. They made up the paper in their leisure hours. Their total "investment" in the paper was ten dollars, supplemented by what credit they could get. *Die Neue Zeit* did not survive long.

Yet in this period the first steps were taken to build a Jewish labor movement. On the night after Yom-Kippur (Day of Atonement) in 1884, on the top floor of the building at 165 East Broadway, a tailors' union of Polish and Russian Jews was organized. Cahan was one of the organizers. Years before he had delivered the first Yiddish speech to a meeting of newly-arrived Jewish immigrants. It was to these early immigrants that he later lectured on Socialism and the ideals of the labor movement. Out of his own funds Cahan ordered handbills printed in Yiddish and, together with Weinstein, distributed them on the East Side. The Jewish Tailors' Union organized on that memorable night after Yom-Kippur was the result of a conversation by Cahan with a Jewish presser from Poland, "a tall, wiry man of forty or so, with broad shoulders and with Japanese, black eyes." The presser told Cahan that he had heard his Socialist speeches. Discussing the tailor trade,

the presser described what the workers had to suffer in the sweatshops and at the hand of the contractors. The result was a decision to organize a pressers' union. At about the same time Numa Gretch, a young man from Odessa, near-sighted and rather bald, called a meeting of cloakmakers and obtained the aid of Cahan. Gretch was greatly influenced by the New York *Volkszeitung*, an organ of the German Social Democrats in the United States. The first successful mass meeting of cloakmakers called by Gretch met at 177 East Broadway. Cahan spoke and Gretch registered them as members of a "union." Gretch was later elected National Secretary of the Socialist Labor Party.*

In the last four years of the '80's strikes of cloakmakers were frequent. Unions were organized and disappeared, the eight-hour agitation and intolerable conditions in the garment industry bringing the workers out of the shops time after time. Only the Gotham Knife Cutters' Association and the United Cloak and Suit

*The above sketch of this early period is adapted largely from material submitted by Mr. Harry Lang who in turn has drawn on Cahan's *Reminiscences* mentioned in the previous footnote. Mr. Lang adds that "This monumental work consists of three volumes and is a masterpiece which mirrors a generation of men and events, of resplendent dreams and strivings, and great creative work." Mr. Charles Jacobsen and Abraham Rosenberg were also consulted for this period.

Cutters' Association maintained continuous organizations in this period.

In October, 1889, the Gotham Knife Cutters reported 127 members in good standing. As this was the same membership reported at the close of the year 1887, it seems that the local was either restricting its membership or that cutters were at least not encouraged to join. However, the local in June, 1890, gave its attention to the organization of women and in August they were organized as "Lady Gotham." A minute book and seal were purchased for the women but how many members were gathered into "Lady Gotham" and how long this women's organization survived is uncertain as the minutes of the Gotham Knife Cutters for the following year are missing.

In the same year (1890) the local loaned \$250 to the United Suit Cutters, contributed to the striking cloakmakers and printed circulars to help English-speaking shirt operators to organize. In August the local voted that on and after September 29, fifty hours should constitute a week's work and that \$20 should be "the standard wages paid."

The assistance given the cloakmakers and suit cutters was important as they were involved in a bitter strike which became a lockout and lasted for nine weeks. "On May 19, 1890," writes Levine, "two large cloak manufacturers discharged

a number of 'inside' workers who were 'supposed to be very active members of the union.' The operators in one of these shops left work out of sympathy for the discharged union men. The firm then locked out all its operators. Several other manufacturers came to the support of this firm, revived the Cloak Manufacturers' Association which had been organized in October, 1889, and locked out their workers. By the end of May the number of locked out workers was about 2,000. It looked as if the operators would be defeated. But on June 9 the cutters in the employ of Meyer Jonasson joined the strike. That was a new fact in the history of the cloak-makers' unions. In retaliation, some of the members of the Cloak Manufacturers' Association on June 14 locked out their cutters. To meet this situation, the operators and cutters obtained the support of the contractors. On June 16, a sort of 'triple alliance' was formed by the Operators' and Cloak Makers' Union No. 1, the United Cloak and Suit Cutters' Association, and the Contractors' Union for the purpose of combining their forces against the Manufacturers' Association until the unions were recognized. They formed an 'Amalgamated Board of Delegates' which assumed the direction of the strike."⁴

⁴*The Women's Garment Workers*, p. 48.

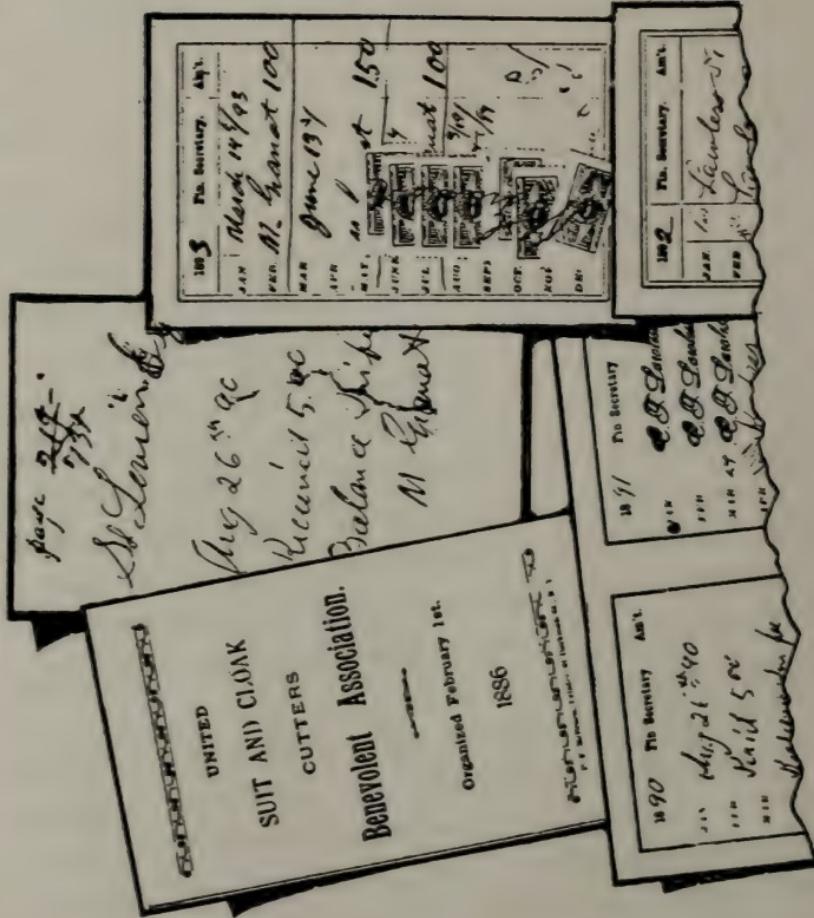
In addition to the financial aid extended to the locked out cutters by the Gotham Knife Cutters, the latter furnished them with a list of members in bad standing working in the trade. The striking cutters tried to invoke the aid of the courts against the manufacturers but failed. In the shops of the Cloak Manufacturers' Association the lockout was made general. Parades, demonstrations and mass meetings were held and on July 12, the warring forces met in conference. The manufacturers, the cutters and a "Professor" Garside, who had become conspicuous in the strike, signed an agreement providing for recognition of the union and arbitration of disputes but which ignored piece rates and discharge of strikebreakers. The cutters were satisfied but the strikers rejected the agreement by a vote of 1,536 against 20. The strike continued, the "triple alliance" dissolved, the cutters returned to work on July 20, and an agreement was reached five days later. The support given by the cutters to the strike contributed much to its successful issue despite the fact that they abandoned the struggle five days before its end. For the first time an agreement was signed that gave recognition to the union.⁵

Garside, who settled the strike, was an eccentric character, a young man, handsome, and wore a small, blonde beard. His first name was

⁵Levine, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-54.

HISTORY OF LOCAL 10

OLD MEMBERSHIP CARDS



Thomas. He was an immigrant from Scotland and lived in Baltimore. He had studied to become a priest, later came into contact with German Socialists, and later declared himself a convert to Socialism. Still later the Socialist Labor Party expelled him as a swindler. He then associated with Anarchists and declared that the Socialists were persecuting him because he was a genuine "revolutionary." It was discovered some time later that in another city he had attacked the eight-hour movement as not being radical enough while in another city he supported the eight-hour day. He was fond of asserting that "the capitalists want to kill me." In New Orleans he declared he had been attacked by a man with a razor; in Chicago that he had received a letter threatening his life; in Minneapolis that he had been offered poisoned whiskey. Cahan refused to have anything to do with Garside.

Abraham Rosenberg, later President of the International, relates in his memoirs a rumor among cloakmakers that Garside was a spy of the manufacturers. Cahan had insisted that he be not associated with the strike but he was permitted to be active because of his command of English. He lectured in churches for the strikers and obtained considerable publicity for them in the English dailies. Garside also gathered funds for the strike but spent considerable

sums for luncheons and dinners given to representatives of the press. He made no accounting of the funds and then disappeared.

The principal strike leader was Joseph Barondess who had the confidence of the strikers and who had contributed much to organization of the cloakmakers. He did not, however, participate with Garside in the strike settlement. In the press Barondess was known as "the king of the cloakmakers." At the meeting to discuss the settlement the strike committee brought Abraham Cahan to translate the agreement into Yiddish. He declared the agreement a bad one but that the cloakmakers should decide for themselves without any agitation for or against it. Barondess was on the platform while Cahan was translating the agreement. At Cahan's suggestion ballots were distributed and the cloakmakers voted against the settlement by a majority of 1,536 to 20. A remarkable scene followed. Cahan declares that "a disturbance replete with sacred enthusiasm ensued. There was deafening applause, cries. Some danced, others laughed hysterically. Still others embraced and kissed. After that the strikers began to push their way to the platform, each with a watch or ring or earrings which they had taken off their persons." Cahan and the members of the committee were filled with emotion; tears came to their eyes as they admired the deep feeling and

enthusiasm which animated the strikers after such a protracted struggle.*

An extraordinary feature of the separate settlement made by the United Cloak and Suit Cutters' Association with the bosses was an agreement to pay the cutters full wages for every day they were on strike. The manufacturers were eager to settle because independents not in the Manufacturers' Association were getting the work.

Following the year 1890, the official records of the Gotham Knife Cutters are missing until the year 1902, except for a constitution amended in 1901 and the organization of another union mentioned below. In the intervening years the organization survived while other unions in the trade collapsed, and collapsed again. These years were a period of final struggle between the Knights of Labor and the American Federation of Labor for the allegiance of the organized workers; the appearance and clash of rival social philosophies; dual unions, a nation-wide industrial depression, and a disastrous strike in the garment industry in 1894 which became general and prostrated the unions in the cloak trade. The United Cloak and Suit Cutters' Association went out of existence. In 1894, this local affili-

*I am indebted to Mr. Harry Lang who has consulted Cahan's *Reminiscences* and Rosenberg's *Memoirs* for these recollections of Garside, the part played by Cahan and Barondess in the strike, and the strike itself.

ated with the United Garment Workers but within a year its members no longer met.

Gotham members participated in the organization of another union of cutters in 1895 which was incorporated under an act of the State of New York providing for the incorporation of "benevolent, charitable, scientific, and missionary societies." These cutters were organized under the ambitious name of "The United Wrapper, Tea Gown, and Ladies' Waist Cutters' Protective and Benevolent Association of New York and Vicinity." The officers were five trustees and the incorporators were Nicholas Jagoe, John Ries, Charles C. Hoffman, Jacob Grul, Philip W. Berger, David D. Hoff and William Whitton. The declared objects of the union were "For the amelioration of the conditions of its members, the promotion of social intercourse among its members, the diffusion of the principles of benevolence and charity, and the granting of relief to its members and their families in sickness and distress." The language suggests a survival of the traditions of the old benefit and burial societies out of which the trade union movement issued some fifty years before. The members of this union were eventually taken in by the Gotham Knife Cutters.*

*I am indebted to Nicholas Jagoe for a complete copy of the incorporation papers of the union which bear the date of February 18, 1895.

The Gotham Knife Cutters maintained a precarious existence and in 1901 the local amended its constitution. This document may be briefly summarized. No feature of its K. of L. history survived. Applicants must be over the age of eighteen, the membership fee was \$1, and the dues 30 cents a month. The officers were a President, Vice-Pres., Recording Sec., Financial Sec., Treas., Inner Guard and Outer Guard. Officers were elected semi-annually in June and December. The Executive Committee consisted of seven members, the President, Vice-President, Recording Secretary and four others appointed by the President with the approval of the members. Piece work was prohibited and members employed in houses where a majority of the cutters were union men were required to cease work if non-union men were brought in and report the matter to the Executive Committee. Members in each shop elected a shop steward who must file a report with the union once each month. Without the consent of the union, no member could teach the cutting trade to any person. Apprentices were granted an employer only by a three-fourths vote of members at a union meeting and all apprentices served two years. They were not permitted to work for any other employer in this period without the consent of the local.

We may now turn to consider the resurrec-

tion and development of the United Cloak and Suit Cutters' Association from the disaster of 1894-5.

NOTE

There is no record of a complete roster of officers elected by the Gotham Knife Cutters in 1883, when the union was organized but on June 27, 1884, twelve officers were elected, "The rest of the court," reads the minutes, "to hold their places for the balance of the term." The officers elected on that date were as follows: Master Workman, George J. Lippert; Worthy Foreman, Edward J. Pierce; Worthy Inspector, James McCall; Almoner, John P. Henrys; Financial Secretary, Campbell Smith; Worthy Treasurer, Joe Simons; Recording Secretary, Edward J. Manning; Statistician, Andrew Nolan; Unknown Knight, Jacob Diller; Inside Esquire, Robert Silverburgh; Outside Esquire, Bernard Abrams; Judge, Thomas Hoad. The officers who continued for the balance of the term were a Venerable Sage, an Assistant Unknown Knight, a Judge Advocate, and a Clerk.

CHAPTER III

THE UNITED CLOAK AND SUIT CUTTERS' ASSOCIATION

Reference has been made in the preceding chapter to the disappearance of the union of Cloak and Suit Cutters in 1894-5, but before considering its revival it is interesting to observe that the old organization retained something of the old benefit and burial societies of an early period of trade unionism. This is evident from its Preamble to the constitution amended in 1893. Although it had emerged years before as a fighting organization of cutters to increase wages and shorten hours, the language of the Preamble comes down from an early period. The union was to "alleviate the condition of our worthy members upon whom sickness or other misfortune may come; to protect them in their just rights without infringing the just rights of others, and to make such provision as will obtain for them decent burial when they die."

The officers consisted of a President, two Vice-Presidents, a Financial Secretary, a General Secretary, a Treasurer, a Sergeant-at-Arms, and five Trustees. The provision for two

Vice-Presidents is exceptional but was necessary because of the German members who could not understand English. Section 3 of Article II provided that "One of the two Vice-Presidents shall be a German by birth or descent, and capable of translating the proceedings into the German language when necessary." Had some provision like this been made at a later period by Local 10 for those who spoke Yiddish considerable friction would have been avoided.

Officers were elected annually and the President appointed committees. Applicants for membership must have worked three years at the trade. A fee of \$25 must accompany the proposal for membership, dues were 50 cents per month, but a portion of the dues were remitted on proof of sickness. Wages were fixed at \$24 for a 49-hour week and payment of overtime was at the rate of not less than \$1 an hour. A member who was suspected of accepting less than the standard wage would have his pay envelope opened by a member appointed by the President and guilty members were fined \$5 for each violation. A death benefit of \$100 was paid the heirs of deceased members. In case of long illness the member could borrow \$50 from the local to be repaid in monthly installments of \$5. In case of death the amount borrowed was deducted from the death benefit. Members sick for more than one month were exempt from pay-

"OLD TIMERS" WHO JOINED CUTTERS' UNION BETWEEN
THE YEARS 1884 AND 1890, NOW MEMBERS OF LOCAL 10



Top Row, Left to Right: Charles Beaver, Ben Kleinberg, Sam Nash,
John Leakey, Sol Lichtenthal, John Cooney.

Center Row, Left to Right: Julius Bender, Charles Nagle, Henry
Isaacs, James McCauley, Henry Frankfort.

Bottom Row, Left to Right: Gusseppi Pica, Charles Balch, David Selig,
Tim Abbott, "Dolly" Levine.



Top Row, Left to Right: Sam Beck, Philip S. Weiss, Adolph Deutcher-
berger, John Dougherty, John Coady, Edward Proops.

Center Row, Left to Right: William Bealle, John C. Ryan, John W.
Settle, Max Hyman, Jesse P. Cohen, Nicholas Jagoe.

Bottom Row, Left to Right: Martin Baden, Peter Simon, Marcus Ros-
ner, Adolph Gabriel, Gerhardt Neuman, Michael Ondusko.

ing dues. Another interesting financial provision was that when the funds reached \$5,000 "the yearly surplus, if any there be, after paying the expenses of the then present year, shall be divided equally, share and share alike" among members clear of indebtedness to the local on December 31. All legal holidays were observed. The President appointed one shop steward for each shop. The local recognized as the tools of the trade "the short knife, the machine and the shears, and any member using the long or the jigger knife shall be fined \$50 for each offense." One apprentice was permitted to each shop employing five cutters and applicants for apprenticeship were examined by the Executive Committee who reported to the local. Apprentices must be under the age of 21 and those accepted were required to serve three years, two years in the trimming department and one year as assistant cutter at the option of the employer. Wages for the first year were \$6; second year \$9, and the third year \$15. The reader may compare these provisions with the constitution adopted by the revived local in 1901.*

In July, 1901, a number of cutters, dissatisfied with conditions and realizing their impotence without organization, were joined by others at the corner of Broadway and 12th street

*I am indebted to Nicholas Jagoe for a copy of this constitution for 1893.

and the suggestion was made that they should meet to consider organizing a local of cutters. These men, about fifteen in number, went to a nearby saloon and after a general survey of the prospects, decided to issue a call for an organization meeting. On July 12 twenty-two cutters responded to the call and elected the following temporary officers: President, Andrew J. Smith; Vice-President, Frank Ogden; Secretary, Charles J. Ubelhor. A collection was taken up to pay the expenses of the meeting. These cutters met each week for several weeks, accepting a few members at each meeting, and taking up small collections to pay the rent of the hall. On August 7 it was decided to form a permanent organization on August 21 and at the meeting on the latter date about 500 cutters met and organized. The permanent officers were: President, Alexander Bloch; Vice-President, William F. Ogden; Recording Secretary, Charles J. Ubelhor; Financial Secretary, Campbell Smith; Treasurer, Mitchell Silberstein; Sergeant-at-Arms, John Treckman. Charles Serrington, David Thompson and Michael O'Leary were elected Trustees.

The last five years of the old century had been discouraging to the workers in the women's garment industry. Rival Socialist factions had dissipated much energy of union members which should have been employed in building the

unions. The cutters, however, were not much disturbed by these quarrels as they consisted mostly of Irish, German and American workers who remained immune from social philosophies. Their views were more in accord with the traditional unionism that was taking form in the American Federation of Labor. The expansion and development of the industry were providing the basis for more powerful unions. In the decade of 1890-1900 the number of establishments increased 120 per cent., the invested capital 127 per cent., the value of the product 133 per cent., and the number of workers about 114 per cent. New branches of the industry were also added in the making of shirt-waists and women's underwear. Of equal significance was the organization of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union in New York in June, 1900, by eleven delegates representing seven unions in four cities. The organization of the suit cutters, therefore, was the logical sequence of the expansion of the industry and the general revival of unionism following the industrial depression of the middle '90's.

It is evident that of the 500 cutters who are said to have attended the meeting on August 21 all did not join. The income of the union for the last four months of 1901 was a trifle over \$300. It averaged \$76 a month. The highest amount received at any meeting in this period

was \$31.50 on September 25 and the lowest was \$5.50 on December 18. From these figures it is apparent that the resurrection of the suit cutters union from the disasters of the previous decade was slow.

Although the provisions of a constitution were frequently discussed by the members and considered by a committee, it was not until early in 1902 that the Constitution was adopted. Its more important provisions may be summarized as follows: Any person over 18 years of age employed as a cutter of ladies' garments for three years or more was eligible to membership. The initiation fee was to be decided from time to time. The officers of the Local constituted the Executive Committee and there were standing committees on finance and auditing. Semi-annual elections were to be held in June and December and voting was by ballot. Dues were fixed at 50 cents per month and a proposition fee of \$5 was charged. The minimum wage of cutters was fixed at \$24 per week, overtime at \$1 per hour, and work ceased on Saturday at noon in June, July and August. Members were not permitted to work during the day for one firm and at night for another and nine holidays were specified for the year. A Judiciary Committee of five appointed by the Chairman tried all charges and a two-thirds vote of members present was required to exonerate, censure, suspend,

fine, or expel a member. Apprentices must serve three years, the first year on canvass, the second on lining and the third on cloth. Their wage was fixed for the first year at \$6, the second at \$9, and the third at \$15 per week. No shop was permitted more than one apprentice unless the shop employed an average of five cutters during the year. Where three or more members were employed in a shop they were required to elect a shop steward who in turn must make a semi-monthly report to the union. A password, changed each quarter, must be obtained by members to be admitted to union meetings. Finally, an important section provided that the Association recognized as the "implements of the trade" only "the short knife and the shears."

In January, 1902, the union received its charter from the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union and became Local 6. A somewhat short-sighted craft spirit manifested itself in the cutters' unions of this period. The cutter had long been considered the "aristocrat" of the industry, his skill and higher wages tending to foster an attitude of exclusiveness and a desire to establish a strategic position for the cutters as a group. However, many American trade unions were in this phase of union history and most of them have not advanced beyond this stage. The restricted outlook of the United Cloak and Suit Cutters of this period is recorded

in its constitution adopted in September, 1901. Article XX provided that no part of its funds could be appropriated "for any purpose other than the payment of actual, necessary and legitimate expenses and the maintenance of the body." The larger view of a trade unionism that considers all phases of the labor movement as worthy of support and the duty of organized workmen to extend democracy and popular control into all the institutions of society was to come later.

However, even at this stage of its history Local 6 recognized something of the larger unionism that was to flower into the greater unionism a decade later. At the second meeting of the temporary organization in July, 1901, a committee of three members was elected "for the purpose of organizing and harmonizing the different warring factions throughout the trade." The Gotham Knife Cutters survived and its existence brought some problems of jurisdiction. The Manhattan Knife Cutters had also appeared on the scene. Gotham and Manhattan also elected committees on harmony. Manhattan was a union of shirt and waist cutters whose members were drawn chiefly from the East Side where the scale was lower than the scale paid uptown. The tendency of the East Side cutters to drift uptown caused Local 6 much anxiety and for a number of years the latter elected a

committee of three to attend meetings of the Manhattan Knife Cutters to protect the interests of members of Local 6. This continued until the East Side cutters affiliated with the American Labor Union in 1905.

One member of the Arbitration Committee was Joseph Barondess. We have already called attention to his leadership in the strike of 1890. He became intimate with the cloakmakers through the United Hebrew Trades where he was a delegate from the Knee Pants' Makers' Union. With Bernard Weinstein he helped to conduct a strike in a few cloak shops and the cloakmakers came to have a deep affection for him. He also possessed personal magnetism, was good-natured and kind-hearted. It was easy to arouse his pity and to obtain a favor from him. He was attractive, well-built and had a pleasant voice which alone commanded respect. He was an excellent speaker and frequently quoted the Bible and the Talmud with much effect. Cloakmakers loved him while the cutters respected his power and influence as they knew that his word was almost law with the operators and pressers. It was to be expected that with Barondess on the Arbitration Committee there would be little difficulty in adjusting the differences between the cutters.*

*The above paragraph is adapted from material submitted by Mr. Harry Lang.

A Joint Harmony Committee of the three locals took up its work in July, 1901. An agreement was reached with the Gotham Association in October which was ratified by Local 6 but its terms are not stated in the minutes of the latter organization. The committee continued its work but made no progress for the remainder of the year and was compelled to ask for additional time to complete its work. Local 6 wished to obtain jurisdiction over all New York cutters and its efforts were devoted to this end. It was the strongest cutters' union in the city and its desire to absorb the Manhattan and Gotham locals was to be expected. However, the Manhattan Knife Cutters had affiliated with the International as Local 9 in October, 1900, fifteen months before Local 6 received its charter. As Local 9 was the first cutters' local to join the International it was conscious of the prestige which this fact gave it and its members resisted assimilation by Local 6. Moreover, the members of Local 9 were largely of the newer immigrant type of Jewish workers with radical views while Local 6 was composed in the main of native born or Americanized citizens of Irish and German origins "who were determined to maintain the tradition of a 'skilled craft' in their local."¹

Committees of Local 6 and the Gotham Knife Cutters held conferences month after month in-

¹Levine, *The Women's Garment Workers*, p. 135.

to February, 1902, when Andrew J. Smith reported to Local 6 that an agreement had been reached with Gotham to form a trades council and that Local 6 should consider the matter of representation on this council. At the same time Local 6 sent word to Gotham that "its members who are working in the cloak trade" should obtain working cards at once. Thus the question of jurisdiction is asserted at the moment of agreeing to organization of a trades council of cutters. This issue, however, was the beginning of a heated controversy in Local 6 which induced the Executive Committee to report on March 6 that it had decided "on radical measures to maintain order and decorum in this association." On March 12 Smith introduced a resolution which precipitated a stormy struggle and divided Local 6 into two factions. The resolution reads:

Whereas, it is of the greatest importance to the cutting branches of the ladies' garment industry that said industry be thoroughly organized and,

Whereas, said organization can only be accomplished and effected by the united efforts of all the cutters in the industry, and,

Whereas, we believe that a trade council representing the various branches of said industry is absolutely necessary, and,

Whereas, the time has now arrived when concentrated

and harmonious action for the welfare of the cutting trade is essential to success, and,

Whereas, we are glad to embrace the opportunity to offer to the cutting branches local self-autonomy of government for the sake of attaining harmony and unity at once, and,

Whereas, we, the United Cloak and Suit Cutters' Local No. 6, of the I. L. G. W. and A. F. of L., holding the sole and only charter for the cutting of ladies' garments in Greater New York and vicinity, and by virtue of power conferred having full jurisdiction, in order to hasten the day when a complete and thorough and harmonious organization of all the cutters in the industry will be an accomplished fact, at meeting assembled this day, March 12, 1902, of our own free will and accord do hereby wave all right and jurisdiction over all ladies' waists and washable goods, and also where now manufactured in and under the control or order of and through contractors employed by cloak or suit houses and their branches, such as misses, children's and infants, including the cutting of skirts, jackets, eton wraps, mantelo, underskirts, capes, tea gowns, dressing sacques, and such other garments as are generally manufactured in cloak and suit houses, except in such houses where in consequence of a change of trade one line of goods is abolished or diminished and another advanced or substituted, the question of jurisdiction shall be settled by the trades council.

The resolution was an approach to a settlement of the quarrels among the cutters' unions. It proposed to make some important concessions to pave the way to the organization of a trades council of cutters and to leave to the delegates of this body the duty of adjusting any other differences that might arise and also obtain co-

operation of all cutters for their common interests. The author of the resolution, however, does not seem to have possessed the tact required to win some members to his point of view and it also appears that some influential members sincerely believed that any concessions by Local 6 in the matter of jurisdiction would be a mistake and they stubbornly opposed any change in the policy of the local. In a disorderly meeting charged with much feeling the resolution was adopted by a vote of 29 to 9 but only after some confused voting on two amendments and a decision by President McCauley which left the question in an unsatisfactory state for some members and the whole matter was reconsidered in a special meeting on March 17.

The question announced at this special meeting was to reconsider the action taken in "waving the right over the ladies' shirt waist and washable goods to another body." The resolution of March 12 was rescinded and Smith entered a protest on the ground that this action was unconstitutional. At the following meeting on March 19, the members declared the action of the special meeting "null and void." President Herman Grossman of the International was detained in the hall until this decision was reached and then was admitted to the meeting. Grossman appealed to the members to avoid factional quarrels and then retired. Andrew J.

Smith, whose resolution had brought so much heat into the local, made a dramatic statement. Taking from his pocket a sworn statement which he intended to use in obtaining a writ of mandamus against the local if it approved the action of the special meeting of March 17, he destroyed it after disclosing the character of the document. Thereupon another resolution was introduced to reconsider the action of the meeting on March 12 at the next meeting, but it was defeated. President McCauley appointed a committee to find "ways and means" to amalgamate "this organization and the Gotham Association" and the meeting adjourned.

Nevertheless, another special meeting was called for March 24 to consider the old controversy involved in the Smith resolution. How it could be held, considering the action of the previous meeting, the records do not disclose. This special meeting also rescinded the Smith resolution adopted on March 12 whereupon Smith, now an organizer of the International, announced that the International had granted charters to the Gotham and Manhattan organizations.* The action of the International wid-

*Here is a curious puzzle in the minutes of Local 6 of March 24, 1902. "Brother A. J. Smith," we read, "then stated as official organizer of the I. L. G. W. that the application for a charter from the Gotham and the Manhattan Associations had been granted." The implication from this record is that Gotham and Manhattan had each applied for charters and that both requests had

ened the breach between the latter and Local 6 but Local 6 continued its efforts to get the consent of the Gotham Knife Cutters to amalgamate with it. In April, Alexander Bloch brought charges against Smith but President McCauley declined to accept them as they were not specific. In the same month the factional controversy was carried to the Central Federated Union by electing a committee to protest

been granted, but as stated above Manhattan had received a charter in October, 1900, and was admitted to the International as Local 9. In the convention of the International held in Philadelphia in June, 1901, Manhattan is listed as Local 9 and credited with paying dues from October, 1900, to the period of the convention. My interpretation of Smith's statement mentioned above is not that both Manhattan and Gotham had applied for charters which had just been granted, but that Manhattan had given its consent to Gotham's application for a charter. It had been the rule in this early period for the International to consult one local union if another of the same craft applied for a charter in the same city even if the union consulted was not itself a member of the International. Secretary Braff also informs me that he followed this course when Manhattan applied in 1900. Although Gotham had not affiliated with the International he notified Gotham that he had received an application for a charter from Manhattan. Gotham did not answer and the charter was issued to Manhattan whereupon, Mr. Braff informs me, Gotham then objected. This note is necessary as I find a number of the old members of Local 6 who insist that the latter was the first local of cutters in New York to obtain a charter but the printed Proceedings of the convention of the International for 1901 show that Manhattan was affiliated with the International more than a year before Local 6 organized. The reader will also note that the Smith resolution quoted above asserts that Local 6 held "the sole and only charter for the cutting of ladies' garments in Greater New York and vicinity." The facts cited in this note show that this was a mistaken view.

against seating of delegates of Local 15, the Gotham Knife Cutters. Bloch again brought charges against Smith which were disallowed but Smith and another delegate were withdrawn from the Central Federated Union for failure to object to the seating of Gotham's delegates in that body. Smith gave notice of his intention to apply for an injunction against Local 6 for its "unfair treatment" of him and the trustees were empowered to obtain counsel "when necessary" to defend the local. Smith's threat, however, was not carried out. The protest committee to the Central Federated Union was also instructed to seek redress from the International and, if it failed, to appeal to the American Federation of Labor.

Meantime the action of the International in issuing a charter to the Gotham Knife Cutters became a subject of bitter controversy between Local 6 and the National Executive Board. Local 6 opposed this action and brought charges against the Executive Board on the ground that it had violated the constitution. These charges were presented to the convention of the International in June, 1902, and that body elected an Arbitration Committee to take testimony of all parties concerned and recommend a settlement of the dispute. The decision of this committee was not made until some time in the following October when it recommended that the charters

of all three cutters' locals should be revoked and one charter be granted to the three comprising an amalgamated board.

During this period Local 6 was increasing in membership and its finances became more ample for its work. It was maintaining its leadership as the strongest local of New York cutters while in the same period the Gotham Knife Cutters often faced a financial stringency and found it difficult to pay its per capita tax to the International. Members of Local 6 probably resented the prospect of meeting with the other two locals in a delegate body where Local 6 would have to make some concessions on various matters as they came up. Whatever the motive may be, on October 20 Local 6 decided that it "does not concur in the recommendation of the Arbitration Committee relating to the granting of one charter for the three locals." In the following week Local 6 felt it necessary to elect a committee of three members to explain to the other two locals why it could not accept the proposal for an amalgamated board.

Thus matters stood until the following December when the Executive Board of the International met in Philadelphia. Gotham also rejected the decision of the Arbitration Committee, thus agreeing with Local 6. In the face of this opposition the International through its

Executive Board decided not to try to enforce the decision.

One week after the Executive Board acted Local 6 met and adopted a resolution which condemned the executive but in so acting Local 6 reversed its action of October 20. On the latter date Local 6 voted to "not concur in the recommendation of the Arbitration Committee relating to the grant of one charter for the three locals." On December 29 it adopted a resolution which, in part, follows:

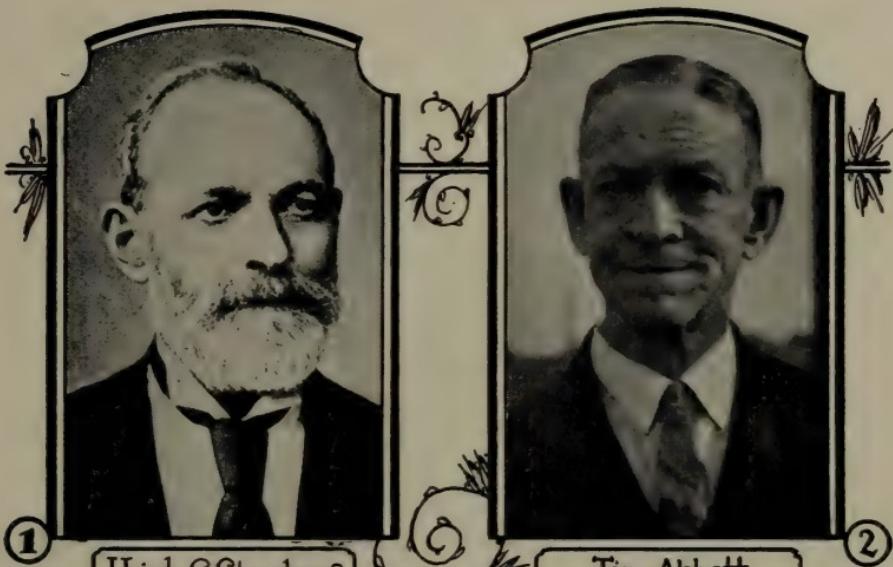
Whereas, the Arbitration Committee after a thorough investigation and in testimony of witnesses from all locals concerned, and members of the Executive Board of the I. L. G. W. have decided that the charters shall be revoked and one granted for an amalgamated association of L. G. cutters, therefore be it

Resolved, that the action taken by the Executive Board of the I. L. G. W. at the meeting in Philadelphia, December 20-21, 1902, be condemned as they have not acted in a fair manner as their sole duty was to concur in the report of the Arbitration Committee as instructed at the convention, as the decision was to be final. Therefore be it

Resolved, that we enter a protest at once that they have violated their obligation by acting contrary to the wishes of the convention on June 9, 1902.

Apparently Local 6 had forgotten its decision of the previous October when it adopted the above resolution for it displayed a surprising change of front. It also asserts in this resolution that the decision of the Arbitration Committee

OUT OF THE PAST



① Uriah S. Stephens

② Tim Abbott



1. Uriah S. Stephens, founder of the first cutters' and K. of L. union in the United States. 2. Tim Abbott, age 71, oldest member of Local 10, joined Gotham Knife Cutters in 1884, a member of Local 10 and still working at the trade, Ledger No. 3. 3. Cloak and Suit Cutters vs. Cap Cutters ball game in 1890. 4. Grounds where game was played.

was to be "final" and that the "sole duty" of the Executive Board was to "concur in the report." This contention cannot be reconciled with the official record of the convention that created the Arbitration Committee.

The dispute arose in the third convention of the International held in New York City in June, 1902. It was referred to a Grievance Committee of five members which divided into a majority and a minority. The majority recommended "that there be one cloak cutters' union with two branches, recognizing No. 6 as the lead local, because they receive the highest wages." The minority recommended that "we recognize all the unions as locals, but according to the grievance we recommend that the new Executive Board, which will be elected at this convention, call a joint meeting of the delegates representing the three locals 6, 15 and 17² to settle jointly and peaceably their grievance; furthermore, that the General Executive Board should recommend to the three locals that they should elect a Trades Council to settle all grievances." A heated debate followed the presentation of the two reports which was brought to an end by the introduction of a substitute offered by Joseph Barondess and which created the Ar-

²The Manhattan Knife Cutters, Local 9, had in the meantime become Local 17.

CHAPTER IV

LOCAL 6 AND GOTHAM UNITE

We may now turn to a consideration of other phases of this period. It is a peculiar fact that while the Gotham Knife Cutters never became a powerful organization it survived the economic distress of 1894-1895 when the suit cutters expired as an organization. Its members were largely cutters employed in the cutting of men's shirts, ladies' wrappers and underwear. As it was the only union of cutters the cloak and suit cutters who were without a union joined it. But the field to cover was too large for the Gothamites and as soon as conditions were favorable, as related in the preceding chapter, the cloak and suit cutters organized in 1901. It is for this reason that the names of "old timers" like John C. Ryan, Andrew J. Smith and Charles Serrington will be found in the records of both organizations as active members and officials.

The wage rate obtained by members of the Gotham Knife Cutters was less than that obtained by Local 6 and it is claimed that the

Manhattan Knife Cutters received even less. Cloak and suit cutters also had more stable seasons and received better compensation for overtime. No records survive of the Manhattan Knife Cutters and what is known of its history is found in the records of its negotiations with and communications to the other two locals in this period of controversy and some data that appear in convention proceedings. Even this information is fragmentary and certainly insufficient to present any connected story of its history. The Manhattan cutters were definitely Socialist in aim. In the International convention of 1902 Manhattan introduced a resolution the final clause of which was a resolve that the convention "declare that the time has arrived for the workingmen of this country to organize themselves as a class politically on a platform voicing the interests of labor as a class for the purpose of restoring the United States to the people of the United States; the country to be collectively owned and controlled by all and for the benefit of all the people."¹ Although crudely expressed, the resolution was adopted unanimously.

Reporting to the convention of 1903, Nathan Ross, delegate of the Manhattan Knife Cutters, said that his local "was formed principally for the purpose of educating the great mass of

¹*Proceedings, 1902, pp. 22-23.*

cutters working on the East Side of New York, who were unacquainted with the trade labor movement," and who were "compelled to work at the poorest and lowest possible wage." As rapidly as these cutters were educated, he continued, they were "turned over to the other two cutters' organizations" according to the particular branch of the industry for which they were adapted. The Manhattan cutters had "experienced great difficulties and at one time had only five members" but that "a strict policy in regard to lapsed and suspended members was gradually building up the organization" which then consisted of 95 members.² Evidently the Manhattan cutters considered their organization chiefly as an educational school in unionism and as a feeder for Gotham and Local 6.

In 1904 the Manhattan cutters were involved in a jurisdiction dispute with the Shirt, Waist and Laundry Workers' International Union. This organization objected to Manhattan taking in shirt cutters. Although a majority of Manhattan's members were shirt cutters the local willingly surrendered its claim to them as the International had agreed to give jurisdiction to the Laundry Workers' International over this class of cutters. Herman Grossman, delegate of the International to the A. F. of L. Convention in 1903, reported that while claiming juris-

²*Proceedings*, 1903, p. 22.

diction over the Manhattan shirt cutters the Laundry Workers' International had refused a charter to these cutters! Grossman's resolution of protest in the A. F. of L. was adopted by that body. S. Perlmutter, delegate of the Manhattan cutters to the International convention of 1904, reported that only a few suit cutters were left to the local after this decision regarding shirt cutters. Manhattan then decided to concentrate on the East Side cloak cutters. "The Manhattan members engaged in this missionary work are all competent mechanics and \$24 men," said Perlmutter, and then added that Local 6 did not permit "Manhattan men to work in shops controlled by it, although the latter receive the standard scale." He urged the convention to give consideration to these problems.³

Delegate Perlmutter presented a resolution which was considered at the third session of this convention. It declared that as Local 6 "has always forced out cutters belonging to our local from the shops it controlled" and asserted it would continue to do so, and considering that the Manhattan Knife Cutters, Local 17, had joined the International at its inception and had always paid its per capita tax, it therefore urged that "any union man in good standing in his local, working under the jurisdiction of the

³*Proceedings, 1904, pp. 6, 10.*

I. L. G. W. U., shall not be molested by any other local or individual member of another local affiliated with the International, provided he receives the standard salary of the house he is employed by."

The Committee on Grievances and Appeals recommended the withdrawal of the charter of Local 17 and giving it a new charter and jurisdiction over skirt cutters. The committee added that its recommendation was necessary to prevent rival claims of jurisdiction. The committee's proposal was rejected, Local 17 pointing out that the skirt trade lasted only a few months in each year "and that there were really no exclusive skirt cutters." President Schlesinger offered a substitute which was adopted and which provided that the charter of Local 17 be revoked, that cutters receiving less than the scale received by members of Locals 6 and 15 be formed into a sub-local under the control of Locals 6 and 15, and that a separate charter for skirt cutters be issued.* The Manhattan Knife Cutters, Local 17, dissatisfied and discouraged by the long struggle over these issues, declined to accept the decision and in 1905 joined the American Labor Union.

Local 17 was not the only local at this period that criticised Local 6 for what was regarded as a narrow view of unionism. In the conven-

**Proceedings*, 1904, p. 18.

tion of 1903 Delegate Kirshenbaum for the Tailor's Branch complained that the cutters were largely responsible for lack of better organization of their craft while a delegate of Local 6 to the same convention, in answer to criticisms, said that the local was willing to "accept men who are competent mechanics" but that the "number of cutters rapidly increased" and it "could not afford to lower the standard of high grade work and reasonable wages in order to accept every cutter at work in the trade in the union."⁵ This was an admission of a restrictive policy which, combined with petty jurisdiction quarrels, could not be the basis for the larger and expanding unionism necessary to cope with the maze of problems which the ladies' garment industry was already beginning to confront.

Local 15, the Gotham Knife Cutters, also to some extent shared the more narrow view, especially against the immigrant invasion of the trade. In the convention of 1903 Delegate John Marks of this local admitted that organization of cutters had not advanced as it should but that "the various elements at work in the industry, and the various scales of wages obtaining in the International and other peculiar conditions resulting from a constant influx of foreigners" made it difficult to organize. Delegate

⁵*Proceedings, 1903, pp. 16-17.*

George Robinson of the same local also thought that the immigrant invasion was an obstacle to better organization.⁶ To a later generation this view will appear strange considering the marked contributions which immigrants have made in the organization of cutters and other workers in the industry.

In one respect Local 15 was especially narrow in its union outlook. When it received a charter from the International it had considerable funds inherited from its period of independence. These funds were sequestered in the hands of a board of trustees. Time after time Local 15 pleaded poverty when it was requested to pay its per capita to the International despite this fund in the hands of the trustees. For example, on March 24, 1903, a motion was considered for the trustees to turn over the entire funds to Local 15. This was defeated but a motion passed for a loan of \$500. This indicated that it had a considerable sum of money on hand. Yet on January 6 of the same year Local 15 tabled a request of the International to pay an assessment of 25 cents which the convention of 1902 had levied on all the Locals. In the meantime to be represented at the convention of 1903 the members paid their assessment. The last mention of the fund is on August 11 when it was reported that it was ex-

⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

hausted.* To do justice to Gotham it is necessary to add that it exhibited an occasional flash of generosity. On March 31, 1903, the local requested the trustees to contribute \$100 to the District Council in aid of strikers and on May 12 it made a similar request for \$300.

While a few minor differences existed between Gotham and Local 6, on the whole they maintained the same unsympathetic attitude toward the East Side cutters of Local 17. In January Gotham tabled a request of Secretary Braff for it to accept the decision of the Arbitration Committee and in September it considered a motion to "let the charter go by default and have it revoked." Although defeated, the suggestion shows the antagonism to the International was sufficient to warrant some members to consider this course. In the same month, September 29, Gotham even revealed its indifference to other workers in the industry by adopting a resolution declaring that "we send a committee of three to Local 6 to get away from the tailors and study the interests of the

*Mr. John F. Pierce, an active member of Gotham at that period, presents the following view of the members in relation to this fund: "The old Gotham fund was retained in the hands of trustees so that in the event that Gotham was no longer a member of the International the latter body would not inherit the money that had been accumulated by Gotham for many years. A clause in the constitution of the International provided that when a local union left the International for any reason its funds became the property of that body."

cutter only." Two weeks before this action was taken Secretary Braff had notified Gotham that it was suspended for failure to pay an assessment and it seems that this prompted the local to try to induce Local 6 to join it in an alliance to "study the interests of the cutter only." Local 6 must be credited with having sent a letter stating that it could not have any more official relations with Gotham until the latter was reinstated by the International. Gotham paid its dues and relations with Local 6 were resumed. The two locals had maintained an agreement for exchange of cards and this agreement was renewed but Gotham's minutes for October 27 show that it objected to Local 6 and Local 17, reaching an agreement without consulting Gotham. Parochial exclusiveness could hardly be carried farther but it was. On November 10 Gotham received a report from its delegate to the Amalgamated Board stating that Manhattan, Local 17, had been notified that Manhattan must turn all its shirt cutters over to the Knickerbocker Association* and Manhattan re-

*The Knickerbocker Association seems to have been specially designed to serve Gotham in blocking Manhattan rather than to serve as a local union. Several members of Gotham obtained a charter for themselves from a union of collar and cuff cutters of Troy, N. Y., as the Knickerbocker Association in order to prevent Manhattan from obtaining a charter from the A. F. of L. should it make application for one. This information is obtained from "Dolly" Levine, an old member of Gotham.

Mr. John F. Pierce presents another version of the origin of the

quested Gotham to help it retain its charter. Gotham voted to receive the report of its delegate but not to receive the request of Local 17! Ordinary courtesy would at least dictate the formal receipt of the request even if it was not granted but Gotham could not concede this to the struggling cutters of the East Side.

As the end of the year approached Gotham made no change in its policy. In the convention of the International of the previous June Gotham had protested against paying an assessment of 25 cents per member. Its protest was not sustained but it continued to refuse payment of this item. On September 8 when it received notice of its suspension Gotham received from its members \$48.50 on this account. The local then went into executive session and resolved that "as long as the charter hung on the wall we go on with the regular order of business." On October 13 Gotham was again notified of the assessment and \$4 was received

Knickerbocker Association. He states that Gotham's charter was granted to cutters of ladies' garments but it had members who were cutters on men's wear exclusively and in order to protect their interests they were forced to join a men's wear local. They organized the Knickerbocker Association affiliated with the International Laundry Workers whose Secretary was located at Troy, N. Y. The prime movers in this movement were Messrs. Keegan, Robinson, Redican, Marks and Lefferts. Mr. Pierce asserts that Gotham had nothing to do with organizing the Knickerbocker Association and that it was not intended to block Manhattan. At a later period, he declares, every member of Manhattan joined Knickerbocker.

on this account from members at this meeting but the only action taken on International Secretary Braff's request was to receive it and hand it "over to Brother Chandler for safe-keeping." On October 27 \$13 was received from members on this assessment, on November 10 \$3, and on November 24 \$2. On the latter date another request was received from Secretary Braff for Gotham to pay this account which was referred to a committee of five. Gotham then passed two resolutions, one that at the next quarterly meeting the members should decide whether they would withdraw from the International; the other, "whether it would be advisable for us to form an international body of cutters and to have it a special order of business at our next quarterly meeting."

Meantime Gotham had participated in a strike and the Executive Board of the International met in New York City on December 7. The board decided to remit the assessment to Gotham considering that it had been weakened in the strike and Gotham received this information when its members met on December 22. Notwithstanding this generous action of the International, at the following meeting Gotham decided by a vote of 47 to 3 to select a committee of seven to consider the advisability of organizing an international of cutters. This ungenerous attitude of Gotham continued into

the new year and if it had been followed by all Locals of the International the latter would certainly have become a rope of sand. Aside from the special conditions which tended to make the American and Americanized cutters an exclusive group in the industry and the union, a theme which we will consider later, this attitude was prompted by fear of the immigrants, a desire to restrict the benefits of organization to a few, and inability to understand the wider significance of working class organization.

The year 1904 opened with Gotham still being urged to pay its per capita tax which was due since the previous October and on January 19 Gotham's delegate to the Amalgamated Board reported that Local 17 was considering the question of giving up its charter because members of Local 17 were not permitted to work in union houses although "there are more non-union than union cloak houses in New York." However, it was not till the following September that Gotham received final word that Local 17 had taken the definite step to apply for a charter to the American Labor Union. The Amalgamated Board considered the complaint of Local 17 (Manhattan) and referred it to Locals 6 and 15 for adjustment. Gotham's action was to send an invitation to the waist cutters of Local 17 to become members of Gotham.

The invitation was certainly not an "adjustment" of Manhattan's troubles but an attempt to entice some of its members and further weaken the East Side cutters.

Two more requests were received from Secretary Braff by Gotham to pay its obligations but not till late in March were they paid and even this tardy action appears to have been taken to avoid suspension and in order to be represented at the International convention the following June.

In February, 1904, a difference arose between Local 6 and Gotham over the cutters in the house of Florsheimer, Roman and Hahn. The records of the two Locals do not clearly reveal all that was involved in this issue but it would appear that Gotham desired to obtain jurisdiction over waist cutters in this house who held cards in Local 6. A conference of the executive bodies of the two Locals had considered this question early in February and on the 9th of the month Gotham's executive reported to the members that Local 6 promised it would do what it could in the matter considering that it had advised its men to stop working in waist houses. The members, however, doubted the good intentions of Local 6 "and thought the committee had been imbibing hot air." Some members thought it futile to continue efforts to obtain the cutters of this house as Local 6 "con-

trolled the General Executive Board" but a committee of five was appointed to continue negotiations.

The controversy continued into the summer when in August the cutters in the house of Florsheimer, Roman and Hahn through their Shop Steward signed a statement declaring that they woud not take out cards in any union but Local 6 and that they would remain with this local. While this was disappointing to Gotham and it sent a letter to Local 6 expressing its view, it appears that the matter was not pressed. Gotham no doubt nursed this grievance against Local 6 but it was still less satisfied with the International and desired an organization of cutters independent of the other workers in the industry. However, this aim could not be achieved without the aid of the strongest organization of cutters, Local 6, and as the latter was also dissatisfied with the International Gotham preferred to keep on good terms with Local 6 in the hope that it would cooperate in the organization of cutters independent of the International.

The convention of the International in June, 1904, enabled the cutters to arrange a coalition with Boston delegates by which they defeated President Schlesinger and Secretary Braff for re-election. James McCauley, a member of Local 6, was elected President and A. Broun-

stein of Boston Secretary-Treasurer. This caused considerable dissatisfaction and a "split" was threatened in the International. President Gompers of the A. F. of L. was called in and a compromise was reached by both sides. President McCauley was retained in office but Brounstein was replaced by John Dyche of the Shirt Makers, Local 23, of New York.⁷ John Pierce of Gotham was elected delegate to the A. F. of L. and G. S. Robinson, also of Gotham, was elected a member of the General Executive Board.

The cutters fared well at the Boston convention but Gotham appeared as incorrigible as ever. Two months later, on August 9, Gotham rejected a proposal to call a special meeting to consider whether "we remain with the A. F. of L. or get out" but adopted another proposal instructing its Executive Board to confer with the Executive Board of Local 6 to discuss whether it would be advisable for both boards to "persuade both Locals to get out of the A. F. of L." Local 6 considered this suggestion the following month, elected a committee of three to consult with the other cutter Locals, defeated a motion to withdraw from the International and a motion to prefer charges against the International was declared out of order.

In fact, as early as May of this year (1904)

⁷The text of the compromise will be found in *Proceedings*, 1904, pp. 27-28.

a "confidential" circular was sent to various unions of cutters throughout the country for the purpose of organizing an independent national union of cutters. The circular was signed by members of Gotham and Local 6, including N. Jagoe, J. T. Redican, Ed. Fruiesen, Wm. Wilson, B. Lewis, D. Isaacs, J. P. Cohen, Ed. Leahy, Chas. Nagle, and G. S. Robinson as Secretary. The circular, dated May 12, declared that the independent union would enable the cutters to "satisfactorily solve all the problems that confront us . . . especially as capital has shown itself so antagonistic to labor" and then added that the movement would win "the respect and good will of the manufacturers, as they have shown themselves in favor of the cutters in the past, but under no consideration have they been willing to treat with cutters when they have affiliated with other branches." Cutters' unions were informed that the committee had been in communication "with numerous cutters' locals . . . who are heartily in favor of this alliance." Gotham and Local 6 of the International, three cutters' Locals of the United Garment Workers, two Locals of the Shirt, Waist and Laundry Cutters, Local 115 of Philadelphia, the Neckwear Cutters affiliated with the A. F. of L., and the Collar and Cuff Cutters of Troy, N. Y., approved the proposal for an independent organization of cutters.

On September 27, according to Gotham's minutes, this local decided to "await a call from the international body of cutters" and on October 25 the Recording Secretary of Gotham made the following entry in the minutes: "Brother Robinson of the Conference Committee of the International Body of Cutters reports the representation of the respective committees of Locals 6, 15, 115, Brother Jagoe of Local 6 being elected Chairman, Brother Lefitts of 115 Vice-Chairman, and Brother Robinson of Local 15 Secretary. A request made by committee that they be empowered to use the seal of Gotham Association whereby they may become a part of the conference board. Motion made and seconded request be granted. Carried." A committee proceeded to Washington to see President Gompers and were told that to obtain a charter the cutters would have to have at least seven Locals in as many states. Being unable to comply with this requirement the project for an independent union of cutters was abandoned. The question is not again referred to in the minutes of Local Gotham after the record quoted above.*

Gotham reported a membership of 150 to the convention of the International in 1903 but

*I am indebted to Nicholas Jagoe for a copy of the "confidential" circular sent to locals of cutters proposing an independent union. I am also indebted to Jesse Cohen for supplying a list of the local unions that gave a favorable response to this circular.

whether this included only those in good standing was not stated. In May, 1904, only 52 members were in good standing with 179 on the books of which 45 were seven or more months in arrears. This poor showing was due to a long strike against the firm of Silberberg Bros. for enforcement of the union rule regarding holidays which cost the union about \$2,000. The members who were at work were assessed \$1 per week and the striking cutters were paid strike benefits of \$10 per week. Gotham also established a death benefit of \$50 in April, 1904.

CHAPTER V

FROM WAR TO AMALGAMATION

We now have to return to the cloak and suit cutters, Local 6, whose history and activities we could consider in the preceding chapter only casually in relation to the history of Gotham. Local 6 made substantial progress in members. Its reports to conventions of the International show that it had 550 in 1902, 400 in 1903, 750 in 1904 and about the same number in 1905. In April, 1902, it decided to abolish day work and to establish a minimum wage of \$24 and three years later it decided to demand a wage of \$28 a week and the 48-hour week beginning the first of the year. In May, 1905, Local 6 decided to make these demands for the first of the following year and beginning with August, 1905, the initiation fee was placed at \$25. Its receipts were increasing and early in 1904 it began to consider the advisability of electing a business agent. This matter came up frequently and was postponed or defeated till October when it was tabled for one year. Despite this action it frequently came up for discussion

when in August, 1905, John C. Ryan suggested an assessment of members two cents a day to pay the salary of a business agent which was defeated and in November, 1905, the proposal to elect a business agent was again rejected. Not until June, 1907, did the cutters have a business agent. Local 6 had then become Local 10 and Alexander Bloch was the first member to hold this office.

In Chapter III we left Local 6 early in 1903 when it complied with the demand of the International that it should join the Joint Board. In March and in the following August Alexander Bloch proposed that the three cutters' Locals be amalgamated but nothing came of it. Local 6 maintained its official relations with the Joint Board but with more or less friction. In February, 1904, it disagreed with the Joint Board regarding the authority of the two bodies and sent a letter to the Joint Board that recalls the narrow policy of Gotham in the same period. "We respectfully submit," said Local 6, "that when we deem it necessary to organize or reorganize any house in the trade or, in other words, desire to make union houses of them, we reserve the exclusive right and jurisdiction to say who shall work in such houses. Regarding the question of working cards, which we issue when we believe it is necessary, I am further instructed to inform you that the issuing

of such cards is entirely the exclusive privilege of Local 6." While the Local preferred to see members of other Locals of the International employed in such houses it insisted on following its exclusive policy whether such members were employed or not. The chief consideration for Local 6 was its own members and its letter candidly outlined this view.

It was at this period that Gotham was making its overtures to Local 6 for withdrawal from the International and which is related in the preceding chapter. The situation was such that it moved General Secretary-Treasurer Dyche to say in his report to the convention of the International in 1905 that "mutual distrust and suspicion between the workers of one branch of the trade and the other have always been the greatest foe of organized labor. Wherever the leaders stand above the rank and file and exert their influence rightly, these tendencies are kept in check. The leaders in our Locals, unfortunately to the great injury of our organization, share the common prejudices. The ill will between the cutters and tailors in our trade is accentuated by the differences of language, race and religion, with the result that in spite of all resolutions of the various conventions calling for the formation of District Councils and Joint Executive Boards, these two branches still keep aloof from one another and

yet their members work side by side under one roof and under one employer."¹

This was all the more regrettable considering that the International was facing a dark year. Secretary Dyche reported that "the report which I have to submit for this year is not a history of growth and expansion, but of a desperate struggle against the wave of reaction against the trade union movement which at one time seemed to threaten our very existence." In September, 1904, the General Executive Board had seriously considered closing the national office and turning the records over to Herman Robinson, organizer of the A. F. of L. The convention elected John A. Dyche, Benjamin Schlesinger and James McCauley to negotiate with other organizations in the ladies' and men's clothing industry in the hope of effecting an amalgamation. Moreover, the evils of the contracting system began to assume alarming proportions and with the racial, religious and craft prejudices fostering divided counsels and separatist policies a more progressive unionism was required to meet the menacing economic changes in the industry.² This greater unionism, however, was still a matter of future evolution.

C. Bingenheimer and John F. Pierce repre-

¹*Proceedings*, 1905. The pages of this volume are not numbered so that none can be cited.

²*Ibid.* See preceding footnote.

sented Gotham in the convention of 1905. Both presented a pessimistic report to the Local, the former advising that the Local withdraw from the International and Pierce gave it six months to live. The latter also thought it worth while to consider joining the United Garment Workers. Gotham considered it another opportunity to revive the efforts of the previous year to obtain the consent of Local 6 to secede from the International for in July Pierce, at a special meeting of the Executive Committee, inquired whether "it would in any way break up the good feeling or any existing agreement between the two Locals if Local 15 was to secede from the International." It was his opinion that Local 6 would probably secede and that Gotham might well wait for its decision and "call a special meeting when it is decided to break away." Local 6 acted on July 24. The chairman of its Executive Board recommended that the Local secede from the International and by a vote of 18 for and 9 against it was decided to call a special meeting to consider the proposal in August. At this meeting on August 28 Local 6 received notice from Gotham that the latter would withdraw from the International after September 1 but Local 6 postponed action for three weeks. On September 18 the matter came up for final decision but Herman Robinson, organizer for the A. F. of L., appeared at the

meeting and made a plea against secession. Local 6 then defeated the proposal. Despite its often narrow policy Local 6 must be credited with having rejected secession a number of times although some of its most influential members favored it.

This unpleasant bit of history was followed by a temporary policy more promising for the International and more fruitful for the cutters themselves. This took the form of negotiations for the consolidation of Gotham and Local 6, thus bringing all the women's garment cutters into one organization. While this did not necessarily mean a more fraternal approach to the other workers in the industry it did mean more unity among the cutters. In October Local 6 elected Serrington, Jagoe and Julian to confer with Gotham with the view of amalgamating the two Locals. On November 27 an entry in the minutes of Local 6 declared that "we are in favor of amalgamation with Local 15, waist cutters," and on December 4 the committee of three was given power to proceed with plans for amalgamation. In the same month the executives of the two Locals met and it appears from the records of the Gotham Executive Committee that early in this month they had reached an agreement. They had agreed to apply for a charter for one local with the hope of consolidating early in 1906.

The waist cutters in the meantime had raised their wage standard which no doubt tended to dispel the fears of some members of Local 6 regarding association in the same Local with cutters receiving a smaller wage. The last meeting but one of the Executive Committee of Local 15 was held on December 5 and it was an excellent example of solidarity as well as a scene of a humorous piece of strategy, a fitting end to the oldest union of cutters in New York City. There were members of both Locals working for the firm of "S. S. and Co.," as well as some non-union cutters. The members of Local 15 were getting \$20 and the members of Local 6 were to ask for this amount. The strategy was to win this rate for Local 6 members and also get the non-union cutters to join the union. The following excerpt from the minutes of December 5 tells the story:

"Moved and seconded that brothers employed of both Locals to meet President Pierce Saturday afternoon at a certain place with their envelopes intact to show them to President Pierce. A motion made that the Executive Board use their efforts to get the non-union men into the respective organizations. The brothers all took a rising vote not to divulge any of the proceedings outside."

How successful this plan was in winning the non-union men we do not know. However President Grossman of the International could

make the cheering report to the convention in 1906 that the cutters "have all United in one branch, and I am pleased to report that they are exercising a good influence over their respective branches of the trade." The long feud between the cutters and tailors had also given way to a better feeling. Secretary-Treasurer Dyche reported to the same convention that "After years of ill will and mutual distrust between the tailors' and cutters' Locals, a working arrangement had at last been arrived at, thanks to the timely intervention of President Gompers and the skillful diplomacy of Brother Herman Robinson . . . who guided the first meetings of the delegates of the two crafts, with the result that the long hoped for District Council has become a reality. Although the council has not yet had the opportunity of accomplishing any practical results, yet the fact remains that its meeting resulted in bringing about a better understanding between the hitherto hostile elements."³ Meantime the International was also recovering from the reverses of the previous year, the proposal to amalgamate with the United Garment Workers was defeated by a referendum vote, and the 1906 convention reaffirmed the vote of the membership.

Local 6 appropriated \$150 for the expenses of the amalgamation and six months after the

³*Proceedings, 1906*, pp. 11, 16, 17.

Executive Boards of the two Locals had met in conference to consider withdrawal from the International, the members of both organizations met to effect consolidation. On January 22, 1906, they gathered in Arlington Hall in St. Marks Place as Local 10. John C. Ryan presided and spoke at some length on the value of amalgamation. The other speakers were Herman Robinson, organizer of the A. F. of L., John F. Pierce of the old Gotham Association, President Grossman and Secretary-Treasurer Dyche of the International. The officers of Local 6 continued in office until their successors could be elected in February, and after extending thanks to the Amalgamation Committee and the speakers the first general meeting of Local 10 adjourned.

Here we may pause to consider the peculiar conditions that in large measure account for the anti-social and ultra-conservative policies of the cutters. The upper layer of skilled workers in all industries where trade unions have appeared have always passed through a period of exclusiveness and many skilled workers have never advanced beyond this stage. In some industries it has survived so long that it has either wrecked unionism in an industry or reduced it to a shadow. This is especially true of the production of iron and steel and tinplate. This industry is especially apt for illustration because

it, too, faced an immigrant invasion. Even the contracting system appeared where a skilled roller would contract for the output of a certain department and pay his men as low wages as possible. Puddlers, rollers, heaters, finishers, hammermen, shearmen and others representing a variety of degrees of skill, constituted little aristocracies, each suspicious of the others. One thing they had in common. They considered the lesser skilled and the unskilled of little importance and these workers were not admitted in the various unions of the skilled.

After most of the skilled workers united in the Amalgamated Association there was continual friction and occasional secessions. The Scotch, Irish and Welch were the first immigrants to invade the industry and later came the Hungarians, Poles, Russians and similar nationalities. Not until it was too late to recover lost opportunities did the Amalgamated Association open its doors to the unskilled. Meantime the United States Steel Corporation emerged as a giant feudal master and the upheaval of 1919 showed that with all the power of the trade unions of the country enlisted it is almost impossible to organize the iron and steel workers. With hundreds of thousands of workers in this industry the Amalgamated Association today has less than 10,000 members.⁴

⁴See Fitch, *The Steel Workers*, Part II. *Report on the Steel Strike of 1919*. Commission of Inquiry Interchurch World Movement.

CHARTER OF LOCAL 10

INTERNATIONAL
Ladies Garment Workers
LOCAL 10
DOTH GRANT THIS
CHARTER

To all whom it may concern, We, the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, No. 10, of the City of New York, do hereby constitute and establish a Local Union, and to their successors to constitute a branch of this the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, to be known as **EXECUTIVE BOARD**, of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union of the City of New York, and shall remain in force for the purpose of effecting a thorough organization of the said Local Union. And said Local Union is hereby authorized to initiate into the International Union any persons duly proposed and elected according to the Constitution and by-laws of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, and to enact and administer the Constitution and by-laws of the said Local Union, under the International Constitution.

Provided, That the said Local Union conform to the Constitution, Laws, Rules and Regulations of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, and be located in the City of New York, and shall not be removed therefrom without consent of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union. And in further consideration of the due performance by the above Union of its obligation under this Charter, the

International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union

do bind themselves to support said Local Union No. 10 of the City of New York, in their demands, rights and privileges and benefits as a subordinate Union.

In Witness Whereof, We have ordered the Seal of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union to affix thereto, this twenty-second day of January, One Thousand Nine Hundred.

Henry Gruenman
General President
John A. Lyons
General Secretary
General Treasurer.

William Rosenberg
Treasurer
John P. Lynch
Chas. H. Hayes
Julian Johnson
Albert C. (not legible)

GENERAL
EXECUTIVE
BOARD.

The charter was issued on January 22, 1906



The cutter not only possessed peculiar skill in the industry. Certain characteristics of his employment and his position in the shop tended to produce the psychology of an upper group whose members believed that they were of special importance. As a matter of fact the division of labor in modern industry makes each worker really interdependent rather than independent. The cutter himself would do no cutting if the workers in the textile industry did not provide him cloth to cut. It is this larger view of the cooperative character of all forms of labor which the cutters of a quarter century ago and even later did not realize. Regarding their skill as a special business asset, something more precious than that possessed by other workers in the industry, their policies were a logical result of this view. The cutter also spent three years as an apprentice acquiring his skill and he commanded a better wage than other workers in the industry, thus adding to his social standing in the industry.

The cutters' psychology of exclusiveness and consciousness of being an upper group was also enhanced by the fact that his work brought him into closer contact with the head or the manager of the firm. He had to be consulted from time to time about some matter related to his craft, especially as to the amount required for the production of a certain style. This very con-

tact with the head of the firm or his representative unconsciously confirmed the cutters' impression of his special social position in the industry. For this same reason other workers in the shop would also get this impression of him.

Another contributing factor probably had some importance in creating the idea of cutters as an upper class. The cutting room was physically separated from the working room of the other workers in the industry. This isolation or partial aloofness of the cutter unconsciously suggested the aloofness of the owner or manager. The contact of the cutter with other workers was not as intimate in the shop as it was between these workers themselves. That all this had an influence upon the psychology of the cutters is evident.

Then the cutters often were a very small group compared with all the workers whom they supplied in other departments. Workers in the other departments had to come to the cutter from time to time with requests either to match the material or to re-cut a part of it. Cloth might have been spoiled and require the advice of the cutter how to avoid complete or partial loss. All this, together with the fact that the skill of the cutter was the basis for making a good garment, influenced the cutter to look upon himself as a worker more worthy and

more essential to the shop than the other workers. All the economic, personal and social relations of the shop tended to give the cutter his conservative and often separatist views which found expression in his union.⁵

If in addition to the causes enumerated above we consider the immigrant invasion of the industry we have another important factor to account for the actions of the American and Americanized cutters. In this they merely shared the fears that all American workers have regarding immigration. In fact, fear of the immigrant has run through all our history. The large migration of Germans to Pennsylvania in the eighteenth century gave the Quakers considerable concern. Even in the American Revolution quarrels broke out between the soldiers drawn from the various colonies because of their sectional, national or religious differences. The Catholics of Maryland found it difficult to fight by the side of Presbyterians of New England. Troops coming from a slave region were regarded with prejudice by northern troops. One general wrote that "the Pennsylvania and New England troops would as soon fight each other" as the British.⁶ So strong has been this preju-

⁵I am much indebted to Mr. Elias Lieberman for his valuable suggestions regarding the psychology of the cutter. The above four paragraphs are adapted from an interview with him.

⁶Nevins, *The American States During and After the Revolution, 1775-1789*, Chap. XII. The reader will find a very informing dis-

dice against immigrants than an American or Know-Nothing Party carried a number of states before the Civil War. Its intention was to exclude all but native born Americans from public office.

The cutters observed the immigrants, accustomed to a low standard of living, entering the industry and they feared that the union standards established by organization would be broken down. The cutters believed that they could keep back the invasion by a policy of exclusion and enmity and keep a special position for themselves in the industry. The Manhattan Knife Cutters found barriers raised against them wherever they turned. Representing the cutters of the East Side, workers of immigrant origin and with a radical philosophy of unionism that recognized no special groups among the workers, these cutters were driven to secede from the International. Meantime the immigrant tide rose higher and higher and flowed into every department of the industry. It could not be kept back and it had to be reckoned with.*

*Messrs. Epstein and Martin disagree with the view that racial and religious differences were factors in the conflicts between the

cussion of racial, sectional and religious prejudices in this citation. Brewer's *The Conquest of New England*, New York, 1926, is a striking example of the fright of a native American over the tremendous foreign population which has pushed the old Yankees into the background.

Fortunately, the Jewish immigrants who furnished the bulk of the invaders brought with them lessons which they had learned in the bitter economic struggles in their homelands. They had been oppressed and marked for exclusion, especially in Russia, and they brought into the industry and the union the ideals of solidarity of all workers without distinction. The Jewish Socialist cutter and tailor accepted no artificial or assumed distinctions that would segregate workers into special groups because of skill or lack of it. Nor did they permit the special conditions that surround the cutter to shape their conduct toward other workers in the industry. Their very numbers broke down the barriers that obstructed their way into the industry and the union. The immigrant who was regarded as a menace developed powers of ini-

older and the newer generation of cutters but were solely due to the unreliability of the "new comers" for many years in organization and strikes. They add that religious and racial issues never at any time came up in the local. Levine in his study was impressed with these conflicts and they were also impressed upon the writer in his investigations. It is not contended that racial and religious questions or even feeling ever became an open "issue" in the union. All that is asserted is they were a subtle undercurrent in the psychology of the members and it becomes apparent from the period when the cutters of the East Side began to organize in the Manhattan Knife Cutters. Nationalist sentiment as against "foreigners" was especially pronounced in the publicity statements of the American Benevolent Association in 1919 and Mr. Epstein and Mr. Martin were both prominent in that organization. It is a well known fact that nationalists views are often accompanied with racial prejudice. See Chapter XIII.

tiative, cohesion and fighting qualities that were needed to cope with the increasing tendency of the industry to disintegrate into the hands of a swarm of sub-manufacturers and contractors. The old separatist unionism would have succumbed to the menacing economic trend of the industry had it survived.

The fears of the old cutters, however, were human and natural. They could not anticipate that the immigrants would play the part which they later played in the industry and the union. The struggle between the old outlook and the new one was not yet finished at the period which we are now considering. It was to continue for a number of years and we may now turn to consider the narrative of another phase of the evolution of New York cutters in the women's garment industry.

CHAPTER VI

LOCAL 10 EXPELLED, 1907

The amalgamation of the New York cutters in one local came at an interesting period in the history of the labor movement. The International had not yet become stabilized as a powerful union able to enforce decisions of conventions and rulings of the General Executive Board. Excepting many of the cutters, the members of the local unions were inexperienced and too often ventured on strikes without sufficient preparation. A defeat often meant disintegration of the union and then its revival when conditions appeared more favorable. Secretary Dyche presented an interesting review of the situation to the convention in 1905. The local unions were still young and their "lack of diplomatic skill in negotiating terms with the manufacturers" was a "cause of many useless and avoidable strikes." Moreover, they rarely consulted the General Executive Board in calling strikes and "the members who are invariably new recruits expect great results at the beginning." They assume "a bellicose and

warlike attitude . . . as soon as a local is organized" so that the "members soon tire of the continuous strife and struggle, and the organization goes to pieces." As for the International it "found itself in the position of a mere helpless onlooker to the deadly struggle of the locals" and it was regarded as little more than a "figure head." The ties that bound the locals to the International were very slender, largely depending upon the "caprice and good will of the local leaders."¹

This lack of cohesion and discipline made the New York section of the ladies' garment trades a fertile field for the I. W. W. which was organized in Chicago in 1905. The entrance of I. W. W. organizers occurred at a period when an old feud between the Socialist Party and the Socialist Labor Party was still rife. The S.L.P. had for many years carried on a campaign of vituperation against all unions affiliated with the A. F. of L. and had ten years before organized the Socialist Trades and Labor Alliance to replace the A. F. of L. It was not successful in this, the S. T. and L. A. was merged with the I. W. W., and the latter had the cooperation of the S. L. P. in organizing I. W. W. locals. Four branches in the garment trades, the cloak makers, the pressers, the white-goods workers, and the ladies' tailors, constituted

¹*Proceedings, 1905. Report of General Secretary-Treasurer.*

Local 59 of the I. W. W. in 1905-1906. With these branches of the I. W. W. sniping at locals of the International and waging a vigorous campaign against the "false principles of the American Federation of Labor," the International was going through a trying period. The New York Joint Board of Cloak Makers' Unions and its locals were strong supporters of the Socialist Party and they drew the fire of the I. W. W. and the S. L. P.² However, the cutters were largely immune from these struggles although an increasing number of cutters of Socialist sympathies and affiliation were joining Local 10.

The consolidated organization was chartered as the Amalgamated Ladies' Garment Cutters of Greater New York and Vicinity, Local 10. The constitution of the new organization makes possible a comparison with the standards established by Local 6 five years before and it also brings out a few interesting contrasts. The term of service of apprentices was the same but in 1902 they were required to work the first year on canvas, the second on lining and the third on cloth. In the first period wages were fixed for the first year at \$6, the second at \$9, and the third at \$15 per week but Local 10's schedule was \$6, \$12 and \$18. Local 10 fixed

²See Levine, *The Women's Garment Workers*, Chap. XVIII, for a fuller account of this period.

the minimum wage at \$25 a week, a gain of but one dollar per week in five years. Pay for overtime remained the same as well as the half holiday on Saturday but Local 10 specified ten legal holidays where Local 6 had provided nine five years before. In the former period the 53-hour week was the rule while Local 10 provided for the 50-hour week. An interesting change in the development of the knife in five years is seen in the fact that in 1901 Local 6 declared in its constitution that it recognized only "the short knife and the shears" as the implements of the trade. Local 10 made no mention of the knife. Local 6 had fixed the dues at fifty cents a month, Local 10 at fifteen cents a week, an average of ten cents more per month.

The most striking changes appear to be in the admission of members, the tendency being to make admission more restrictive. The age of 18 and the three years' apprenticeship remained the same but the proposition fee was increased from \$5 to \$25, which seems excessive at that period but is not now. Local 10 also added the following section which appears to be particularly burdensome in that no matter how good a member and competent a cutter the applicant might be it applied to him as well as all others: "A term of six (6) months' probation shall be served by all members on joining this Association, during which term all trade privileges

shall be denied them; also such other privileges as (are) herein provided for." This clause suggests the survival of the exclusive outlook of the old Locals 6 and 15. The password was retained as a method of admitting members. Where Local 6 had prohibited members from working during the day for one firm and at night for another, Local 10 merely provided that "No member shall be permitted to accept employment by the day." On the whole the structural character of the local remained with a few minor modifications.

Local 10 fixed the death benefit for members not over 40 and who were in good standing for twelve or more months at \$100. Those who joined prior to July 1 and were in good standing for six months were entitled to \$125 but those of this class between the ages of 40 and 50 were entitled to only \$50. No death benefits were paid in the case of members who were 50 years of age or over at the time of joining the local.

In February, 1906, the first election of officers was held and the following were chosen: President, John C. Ryan; Vice-President, John F. Pierce; Recording Secretary, Jesse S. Greenberger; Financial Secretary, Edward J. Fruesen; Treasurer, Charles W. Serrington. Three delegates were also elected to the District Council.

One of the first things undertaken by Local 10 was to wipe out the evil of gambling by members in the headquarters at 10 East 14th Street. One member was reported as losing \$18 in one week in March and the local voted to impose a fine of \$25 on each member caught gambling and this put an end to a long standing evil.

In the first year of its existence Local 10 became embroiled in difficulties and disputes with other locals and the International until its charter was revoked in 1907. The minutes of the local are missing after June 11, 1906, so that the most valuable source of information—the proceedings, votes, motions and resolutions of the local—is not available for this period of controversy and strife. Only the records of the Executive Committee have survived and these record practically only the routine of examining applicants, adjusting complaints and disputes, and acting on reports of committees. The only reliable source of information regarding the origins of the controversy are the proceedings of the convention of 1907 and the proceedings of the convention of the A. F. of L. for the same year.

The dispute began in August when Local 10 called a strike in the firm of Goldstein & Koerner to establish the union rate of \$4 a day. The firm refused to grant this demand and the tai-

lors' local approved the strike. President Grossman of the International gave some consideration to the strike and its developments in his report to the convention the following year, saying that "the District Council took this question up and appointed me to take charge of this strike." He continued: "In order to assist Local 10, they also decided to get out the tailors, operators and pressers, so that the manufacturers could be brought to terms. Notwithstanding the fact that they were non-union men, I had succeeded in getting them out with the exception of some sample tailors, some skirt makers and pressers. I had arranged a meeting to be held on Saturday, August 4, 1906, at 62 East 4th Street, in order to induce the sample tailors, pressers and skirt makers to come out the following week, to try to bring about an amicable settlement between the said organizations and the manufacturers.

"They promised me that if a committee of the cutters and I would be present at their shop meeting, we could probably use some pressure, so as to induce them to come out, but, unfortunately, I was busy with the executive members of Local 10 at that time, trying to get some of the scab cutters to stop work at this shop.

"I had arranged with Brother Rosenberg, who was temporary manager of the Skirt and Cloak Makers' Union, to address that meeting

and hold them out until the committee of cutters and I could come down, so that they would not go to work on the following Monday.

"The following Monday, I being on picket with a committee of the cutters, not only did the sample tailors and pressers go up to work, but those men whom I had succeeded in getting out, previously, were induced by these sample tailors and pressers to go to work, the manufacturers making some concessions to those tailors, consequently the backbone of our strike was broken. After a long struggle, we lost. Although morally the strike was a loss, the Cutters' Union, Local 10, gained their point financially, and are now receiving the scale of prices contended for which is \$4 per day."³

Delegates of Local 10 to the convention also complained of the tailors and there is some justification for the complaint. While the tailors' local approved of the strike it does not appear that enough was done by the tailors to make the strike effective. John C. Ryan, speaking for Local 10, thought there was "something radically wrong" with the tailors and that the cutters were "disgusted with the way the International Union neglected the strike at Goldstein & Koerner" but he was glad to report that the cutters of this firm who had been getting \$16 a week were then receiving \$24. Mortimer Julian

³*Proceedings, 1907, p. 4.*

for the same local wanted a "sweeping change" in the International because "we have union tailors doing the work of scab cutters and vice versa."⁴

The feeling was enhanced by the increasing influx of Jewish workers in the industry. The old fear of East Side cutters also began to possess the leading men in Local 10 and this fear was later expressed by the delegates of the local in the convention. Naturally, two policies developed regarding the attitude to be taken toward cutters receiving a lower wage than that fixed by Local 10, one advanced by the "old timers" and the other by the "new comers." The conservatives, possessing a strong union, insisted on the bosses discharging lower paid cutters and replacing them with union members at \$24 a week. With the high initiation fee and six months probation rule for applicants the tendency was to restrict the number of cutters to a minimum and obtain for them a high union rate. Those who disagreed with this policy favored taking the lower paid cutters into the union and gradually bring them up to union standards. They not only favored this policy out of consideration for the lower paid cutters but also to avoid the development of an increasing number of cutters outside the union who would owe no obligation

⁴Ibid., p. 23.

to Local 10 and would be justified in working in struck shops and thus, they believed, destroy the higher union standards in the end. Subsequent history has shown that this view was the most far-sighted and certainly adapted to the development of a more powerful and effective union.⁵

On the other hand it must be admitted that the cutters "were a closely knit and well-managed union, paid their dues regularly, were in close touch with the leaders of the American unions, and had the general advantages accruing from a command of the English language, greater familiarity with parliamentary procedure, and a longer experience in union affairs."⁶

The cloak makers' locals were not strong and either avoided or were unable to pay their share of the costs of the strike and their delegates ceased to attend the meetings of the District Council. Local 10 then withdrew its delegates and the council ceased to function. Meantime downtown cutters were organizing and received no encouragement from Local 10 which added another issue to the New York situation. President Grossman, in his report to the Baltimore convention in 1907 said: "Local 10 has complete jurisdiction over all the cloak cutters of Greater New York and as there are a number

⁵Part of this paragraph is adapted from an interview with Charles Jacobsen.

⁶Levine, *The Women's Garment Workers*, p. 137.

of cutters working in small houses who do not belong to any organization and are not receiving any way near the scale paid to the cutters of Local 10, and realizing that this element will prove a dangerous factor in case of trouble, I trust that this convention will take this question up as it is of vital importance to the cloak making industry in general of Greater New York. These men have claimed unless we take them under our fold they will start an independent union."⁷

An independent union of these cutters had been organized and it sent two representatives to the Baltimore convention in 1907 with the view of obtaining a charter from the International. I. Aspis, one of these representatives, said that the membership of the union was small, not very active, and that Local 10 "could do nothing for them." However, lately members were coming in fast. These cutters were "quite a different element, working under different conditions" and while it was desirable that they should receive the same wage as members of Local 10 they realized that this was impossible for the present. Still in the reefer shops they had raised the wages of cutters from \$10 and \$12 to \$15 and \$18 a week. He added that these cutters wanted "separate jurisdiction and independence from Local 10.

⁷*Proceedings, 1907, p. 11.*

Even the best men of Local 10 can do nothing for them." The organization existed and could not be ignored. J. Walerstein of the same union merely emphasized what his colleague had said.

John C. Ryan and Alexander Bloch were the delegates of Local 10 and the former said he would not like to see this organization "turn out as the former Local 17" which had turned out "cutters by the score." He favored giving the downtown cutters "moral and financial assistance" but they "must eradicate the apprentice system which ruins their trade." Bloch would not object to issuing a charter to Jewish-speaking cutters but unless they have the same scale as Local 10 the employers would give preference to those working for the lower scale and "the members of Local 10 will have to walk the streets." Secretary Dyche was opposed to issuing a charter to another local of cutters, recalling that the Manhattan Knife Cutters had been a source of quarrels and that the convention of 1904 withdrew their charter. He favored admitting these independent cutters as a sub-local of Local 10 and this action was voted by the convention.⁸

The decision was reluctantly accepted by Aspis and Walerstein but there were some things they wanted to know. Would the con-

⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

vention define the relation of the sub-local to Local 10 and to the International? If the sub-local desired to transfer a member to Local 10 and the latter objected, who would decide? Secretary Dyche did not anticipate any difficulties but if they arose, he said, the sub-local could apply to the General Executive Board. Thus an old issue had risen to plague the cutters and Local 53, subordinate to Local 10, came into existence. Local 10 exercised a large influence in this convention and Mortimer Julian, one of its members, was elected President of the International. The cutters also tried to replace Secretary Dyche by Alexander Bloch but in this they were not successful.

One month before the convention met the independent cutters sent a committee to the Executive Committee of Local 10 asking for a charter after Secretary Dyche had declined to consider the request for one from the International. These cutters had organized as a result of the reefer-makers strike and were told that their request would be considered later. As we have seen, the June convention two months later gave these cutters the status of a sub-local but it was not till the following October that the Executive Committee of Local 10 acted. It then declined to grant the charter. A committee of the sub-local was asked to appear before the Executive Committee and after consider-

able questioning it was learned that the sub-local could not adopt the same constitution under which Local 10 was working because the downtown cutters were working for "all prices." The minutes of October 17 record the opinion of the Executive Committee that these cutters "were a sort of preparation association to advance cutters. The entire argument was (that) they wanted a charter so as to have some standing in the I. L. G. W. U. in case of grievances against Local 10." The committee therefore recommended to Local 10 "that we grant no charter to (a) sub-local until they prove to us conclusively that they can work under the same constitution as we are."

Unfortunately the Executive Committee knew without questioning the committee of the downtown cutters that the latter could not at that time work under the constitution of Local 10. The sub-local could not immediately advance the wages of all its members to the rate maintained by Local 10 and the convention in giving these cutters the status of a sub-local knew this also. The wage rate of Local 10 was a matter of organization and conquest by strikes and negotiation and the new local could obtain it only in the same way. The reason given by the Executive Committee for its action in refusing the charter and thus rejecting a decision of the convention in which the delegates of

Local 10 participated was not creditable to those who subscribed to it.*

In July of the same year (1907) the cutters were at odds with the District Council which had called a strike in the cloak firm of Katz & Company. Local 10 refused to cooperate and Local 23, which was involved in the strike, brought charges against Local 10. "The delegates of the latter," writes Levine, "claimed that the articles of the constitution of the District Council which invested in the Council the right to call strikes was in conflict with the constitution of the International and therefore illegal. They were upheld by President Julian. The cloakmakers' locals then lost interest in the District Council. At the same time, the Joint Board of the cloakmakers' unions called several strikes without consulting the cutters' local. What aroused the cutters even more was the fact that in settling some of these strikes, the Joint Board sent up to the shops cutters of sub-local 53 who were willing to work for \$10 and \$12 a week. On August 25, 1907, Local 10 preferred charges against Secretary Dyche. When these were dis-

*Messrs. Martin, Pierce and Epstein explain this episode by declaring that the General Executive Board granted the charter to Local 53 before the convention of the International met and without consulting Local 10. They add that the International sent a committee to Local 10 before the convention met asking the local to acquiesce in their action but this consent was refused. Martin presided at the local meeting when the request was refused.

missed by the General Executive Board, Local 10 persuaded President Julian to introduce a resolution at the Norfolk convention of the American Federation of Labor in November, 1907, calling for an examination into the affairs of the International and for its reorganization."⁹⁹

The charges and counter-charges developed some bitter personal animosities, especially between Secretary Dyche and the officials of Local 10. The records of the Executive Committee show that it approved the agreement made by its Business Agent, Alexander Bloch, with the firm of Katz & Company on July 5 and on July 11 the committee appointed Nagel, Dorek, Martin and Bloch a sub-committee to draw up charges against Dyche. It held eleven sessions and was not discharged till September 12. Matters were made worse when the cutters retaliated against the Joint Board on October 3 by refusing to call their members out at the firm of Rubenstein and Goldsmith although the tailors were out on strike. Events then followed in swift succession. The General Executive Board approved the strikes of the cloakmakers and when Local 10 refused to order its members to come out the International on November 30, 1907, revoked its charter. A charter was then issued to the

⁹⁹*The Women's Garment Workers*, p. 138.

downtown cutters as the Cloak Suit and Reefer Cutters' Union, Local 53.¹⁰

Within less than two years after the cutters had gathered in Arlington Hall to celebrate their union in one organization they were outside the International and were engaged in a bitter feud with it. Moreover, the industrial stagnation which soon set in weakened the International. Its funds became exhausted the following year, many locals gave up, and the strife between the cutters and other workers in the industry added to the gloom that possessed the members. It was a dark hour for the International.

¹⁰In the convention of 1908 Local 53, as the only cutters' union recognized by the International in New York that year, was listed as the Ladies' Garment Cutters' Union of Greater New York.

CHAPTER VII

LOCAL 10 BEFORE THE CONVENTION IN 1908

With the revocation of its charter Local 10 found itself in an impossible position. It could not hope to function as a union in the industry and at the same time be involved continuously in conflicts with locals affiliated with the International. Its leading members, as stated in the preceding chapter, turned to the American Federation of Labor for aid. The policy of Mortimer Julian, which was the policy of Local 10, was to induce the A. F. of L. to take over the International and reorganize it on a basis satisfactory to the cutters. The local sent Alexander Bloch to the Norfolk convention where Julian induced James P. Holland, delegate of the Central Federated Union of New York, to introduce a resolution to investigate the International. The resolution declared that Julian as President of the International was "handicapped" in his efforts to make it "one of the foremost organizations affiliated with the A. F. of L.," and urged

the convention to instruct the Executive Council of the A. F. of L. to investigate the affairs of the International and to reorganize it "if necessary." A final clause of the resolution instructed the Executive Council to begin its investigation within thirty days. The resolution was adopted except for the last clause.¹

Julian consulted with the Executive Committee of Local 10 a number of times before the form of the A. F. of L. resolution was agreed to. The original idea in October was to prefer charges against Dyche at the A. F. of L. convention and at the meeting of the committee on October 31, Julian handed Bloch a written statement to be used at Norfolk. Bloch was instructed to remain at the A. F. of L. convention until the matter was acted on and he reported to the committee twice by letter, saying that the prospects were bright for an investigation but within a few days after he returned to New York the charter of Local 10 was revoked. It is evident that the original idea of naming Dyche in the charges was abandoned and a request for investigation and reorganization was made instead.

The Executive Council of the A. F. of L. selected Cornelius Ford, A. F. of L. Organizer, to arbitrate the issues. Ford was appointed after

¹*Proceedings, A. F. of L., 1907, pp. 199-283.*

a sub-committee of the Executive Council, meeting in New York, April 17-18, 1908, was unable to get the contending parties to agree. After studying the issues Ford summoned the representatives of the International and of Local 10 to a conference on May 20 and there he submitted the following decision:

1. That the General Executive Board reinstate the Amalgamated Ladies' Garment Cutters' Association of Greater New York, formerly Local 10 of the International Union, to full membership and benefits as existed previous to the revocation of charter.
2. That every effort be made by the General Executive Board, which will clearly and specifically define the duties of district councils and local unions.
3. That Local No. 10 furnish a General Local Board with the duplicate green sheets of the financial secretary's day book, provided by the General Office, and also to send in a quarterly financial report, ending March, June, September and December, and Local No. 10 pay up all arrears and assessments and one-half the per capita.
4. Shop meetings to be called for all branches of the trade working in one particular shop. The business agents of the Tailors and Cutters to be present at such meetings whenever possible.
5. That the question of the status of Local No. 53 or its membership be decided as follows: To resume former relationship with No. 10.²

Thus matters stood when the convention of the International met in Philadelphia in June in

²*Proceedings, A. F. of L., 1908*, p. 203.

the same year. In the meantime the records show that Julian, despite his official position as President of the International, was meeting with the Executive Board of Local 10, conferring and advising with this body as to its actions in the controversy! An entry in the minutes of the Executive Board meeting of December 23, 1907, shows that Julian "appeared on summons" and promised "to assist Committee on Grievances whenever wanted." On the same page is the astonishing entry: "The Executive Board instructs Brother Julian to insist that stamps be issued. He promised to do so."

It is hardly necessary to point out the impropriety of the chief executive of a national organization quietly attending meetings of the Executive Board of a local that was expelled, advising with it as to how best to present a case against his own national associates, and even consent to accept instructions of the expelled local. It is apparent from the evidence that Julian in his official capacity of President was not using the official prestige of his office as a mediator but to serve a former local of which he had been a member in its controversy with the International. It was bad enough for the President to meet with the Executive Board of Local 10 the month before the charter was revoked and advise the board of its course in the controversy, but what is to be said of the action of the same

official after Local 10 was no longer affiliated with the International? The impartial reader of the evidence is compelled to believe that a president with a better comprehension of the duty he owed to the whole organization would have been able to avoid some of the complications that developed and would have contributed something to restore Local 10 to the International without much of the bitterness and strife that actually occurred.*

On the other hand the Executive Board of Local 10 involved itself in a contradiction on January 30, 1908, when a member of Local 8, San Francisco, presented his card, probably without knowledge that the charter of Local 10 had been revoked. The card was refused on the ground that "we don't recognize the I. L. G. W. U. at this time and candidate must pay regular proposition fee." Yet new members were being approved by the board who apparently had joined a union for the first time! Factional feeling must have been keen for the board not to treat a member of the International from San Francisco in a fraternal spirit because the board did not "recognize the I. L. G. W. U." while at the same time the board was conferring with the President of the International and instructing him to provide Local 10 with stamps.

*When Local 10 was expelled, Julian was made a member at large by the General Executive Board of the International.

In this same month the downtown cutters, Local 53, sent a committee to the Executive Board of Local 10 with the view of reaching some agreement by which all the cutters of the city could work for their common interests. Local 53 thought the best plan would be to amalgamate the two unions with the downtown cutters in a branch. "We claim," said the committee, "the differences in the class of cutters are so great as to compel them to work for less money. We can't exist as two Locals. We must, therefore, join hands and work under one head to prevent any conflict." The request was denied. The old issue of cooperation vs. exclusion had appeared and was answered as Local 6 had answered it and as Local 10 had answered it a number of times. The outlook for union solidarity among New York cutters certainly was not bright.

When the International convention met in Philadelphia in 1908, the delegates knew that the case of Local 10 would be the big dramatic issue for them to settle. The local was represented by John C. Ryan, Alexander Bloch and Sam Martin. The first matter brought to the attention of the delegates was the reading of a letter from President Julian presenting his resignation. Vice-President Jacobson presided. Local 53 was represented by I. Aspis and A. Baker who were seated with the other delegates. The delegates of Local 10 were not reported by

the Credentials Committee but they were given the privilege of the floor. Ryan immediately presented the award made by Cornelius Ford which we have quoted above and stated that the General Executive Board should have immediately decided the status of both locals upon receipt of the Ford decision. Secretary Dyche denied that the General Executive Board should have met as the decision had reinstated Local 10 but that the status of Local 53 was for the convention to decide.³ Delegates of Local 10 were then seated.

The larger part of Secretary Dyche's report was taken up with a recital of the events that led up to the revocation of the charter, a partial summary of which we have given in the preceding chapter. As in all factional controversies this one evolved from a difference of opinion regarding the advisability of a given policy to personal dislikes and rivalries. This is brought out in the report. Of the charges brought against Dyche by officers of Local 10 he said: "This is all the more remarkable taking into consideration the well-known partiality hitherto exhibited by Local 10 to my person. I have not the slightest doubt that this business has been skillfully engineered and the ill will of Local 10 turned against myself by Messrs. S.

³*Proceedings, 1908, pp. 4-5.*

Martin and A. Bloch, the President and Business Agent of that local, who became aspirants for the office of G. S. T. In these charges all the failure and difficulties in organizing the Ladies' Garment Workers of the U. S. were laid at my door.”*

Dyche went on to say that the members of the General Executive Board had known nothing about the A. F. of L. resolution and that he regarded it as illegal, in conflict with the constitution of the A. F. of L., and that if President Julian believed the International should be reorganized he should have recommended this course to the General Executive Board. If the action of the latter was not satisfactory he could have appealed to the locals. From the time the resolution was accepted by the A. F. of L. convention, Dyche complained, Local 10 ignored the International. “We cannot allow our Locals to disregard the laws of the International Union,” reported Dyche, “and keep running to the A. F. of L. The whole controversy as it now stands is turned on Sec. 6 of Art. 12, which calls for Locals engaged in one trade to have a Joint Executive Board to transact their business in common, while former Local 10 claimed immunity from that law and demanded the formation of a Joint Board of walking delegates and

**Proceedings, 1908*, p. 11.

each local to have full local autonomy in matters of strikes."⁵

These complaints of Secretary Dyche did not end the criticism of Local 10. Delegates of Locals 9, 28 and 53 and of the New York Joint Board were frank in their condemnation of the local. Local 9 reported that its members were not supported by the cutters except in the strike of J. M. Brady and that "members of Local 10 kept on cutting work for scab tailors." Jacobson of Local 23 warned that his local would no longer stand for "illegalities" of the cutters. Aspis for Local 53 stated the position of the downtown cutters. He began by admitting that a mass of East Side cutters "who work long hours for low wages is a menace to the standard rate of wages of the existing organization." They understand no English and Local 10 could not reach them. Even if they spoke English they could not comply with the qualifications of Local 10 for admission. They had asked for a charter from Local 10 as a sub-local in accord with the action of the previous convention and their application had been denied. They appealed to the General Executive Board and that body told them to wait till the next convention. They obtained a charter only after the charter of Local 10 was revoked. They had no experienced

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 13.

leaders and the General Office did little for them.⁶

Aspis was very restrained in his criticism but Kleinman for the Joint Board was less considerate of Local 10. He was especially bitter because the cutters had refused to pull out their members from the firms of Katz & Co. and Pellman Brothers although they had admitted the legality of the strikes. At Katz & Co., "where the people were locked out, the business agent of the Cutters' Union went so far as to justify the action of the employer. . . . The effect of these lost strikes had a specially demoralizing" result and the members "justly attributed the loss of these strikes to the opposition of the cutters. The bitter feeling engendered among our members against the cutters will long be remembered."⁷

Turning to the defense which the delegates of Local 10 presented, we are impressed with the fact that they rested their case chiefly on the technical point that a decision had been given by arbitrator Ford and, as we have seen, they insisted on acceptance of its terms as mandatory. While they did not ignore some of the charges made against them, at the same time they gave only a minor consideration to them and insisted on the legalist aspect of the Ford decision. Delegate Ryan said that Local 10 had always been

⁶Ibid., p. 30.

⁷Ibid., pp. 31-32.

willing to help the tailors but the latter had never cared for the cutters and had signed agreements with firms "ignoring the cutters entirely."⁸ Bloch contended that the Ford decision proved the action of the General Executive Board illegal as the latter had no right to order the cutters to "pull out their men from S. Katz & Co. and L. Pellman."⁹ Martin also stressed the legalist position by saying: "The G. E. B. helped to violate the constitution in the interest of the Locals of the Joint Executive Board, but was always very strict with Local 10."¹⁰

With this intellectual duel between Local 10 and its opponents out of the way the struggle then centered on a number of resolutions related to the issue in one way or another. Bloch had presented a resolution which declared that "all unions affiliated with the I. L. G. W. U. are prohibited from affiliating with any central body wherein non-affiliated Locals are seated, and that no union shall affiliate with any central body wherein non-affiliated Locals are seated, the penalty for non-compliance with this resolution shall be expulsion. This act to take effect 60 days after adjournment." The Committee on Resolutions recommended six months instead of 60 days. The intention of the resolu-

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 26.

tion was to weaken the United Hebrew Trades of New York which was Socialist in sentiment, many of whose delegates could not understand English. Delegate Rosenberg offered a proviso to exempt unions that desired to join their international but are refused admission, but the whole matter was tabled over the protest of Bloch.¹¹

Although not openly expressed, something of a racial prejudice explains this incident and it is worth more consideration than a reference to the colorless record. The United Hebrew Trades frequently encountered difficulties in its relations with American unions. Organizing a trade where a majority of the workers were Jews, it would strive to obtain a charter for the union from the general organization having jurisdiction over the trade. This was sometimes refused. Two reasons were offered for the refusal: (1) the general organization was opposed to encouraging unions of a pronounced racial composition; (2) in New York there were Locals of the same trade composed of workers receiving a higher wage and better working conditions than those attained by the organized Jewish workers. By chartering Jewish Locals, it was said, sectarian unionism would be encouraged while the competition between these Jewish workers, with "lower living standards,"

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 34.

would menace the standards won by Americans in the unions of the same trade. These reasons carried weight with the old unions but the United Hebrew Trades could not disband the unions it organized. The international unions also declined to admit Jewish immigrant workers to the local unions. This policy was prompted by the idea that by closing the union doors to Jewish workers, working conditions would become better for members of the old unions. It was a narrow policy and if not sectarian was at least nationalist and impossible in the end.

The United Hebrew Trades was organized on October 9, 1888, by a group of Socialists, including Morris Hillquit, the well known Socialist, who had been a "gymnasium" pupil in Riga. The United Hebrew Trades was an adaptation of the *Vereinigte Deutsche Gewerkshaften*, a German organization which played an important part in the New York labor movement.*

To return to the 1908 convention of the International, Local 10 also fought to have that section of Secretary Dyche's report relating to

*The United Hebrew Trades years later had frequent clashes with the American Federation of Labor, the most important following the organization of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers. Shortly after the organization of the present Central Trades and Labor Council, Samuel Gompers decided at a conference of New York leaders that the United Hebrew Trades is necessary and defined it as "a Jewish school for American trade unionism." The racial aspects of this issue are drawn from material submitted by Mr. Harry Lang.

the expulsion of the local stricken out but lost by a vote of 17 to 6.¹²

The real issue, however, was not reached till the Grievance Committee reported upon the case of Local 10. Two proposals were before the committee, one signed by Bloch and Martin and the other by Dyche. As they are of exceptional importance in the history of the New York Cutters, they are quoted in full. The Bloch-Martin proposal reads:

Whereas, we have been contending that Local 53 received a charter from the Executive Board of the I. L. G. W. U. illegally and

Whereas, a decision handed down by the Executive Council of the A. F. of L., placing Local 10 in the same position as before, the revocation of the charter, therefore be it

Resolved, that we, the delegates assembled in Philadelphia, at the Ninth Annual Convention of the I. L. G. W. U., do herewith recall the charter of Local 53, and be it further

Resolved, that the decision of the A. F. of L. be accepted and Local 10 restored to its position prior to the revocation of their charter.

The committee insisted that the charter of Local 53 had been legally issued but as the case had been submitted to the A. F. of L. and the decision was to reinstate Local 10, it recommended revocation of the charter of Local 53, but on condition that Local 10 grants a charter to the downtown cutters as a sublocal, thus carrying out the decision of the previous conven-

¹²Ibid., p. 43.

tion. Until Local 10 granted this charter Local 53 was to retain the charter it received from the International.

This recommendation was a compromise but Acting President Jacobson declared it out of order on the ground that the convention, having accepted the report of Secretary Dyche and having approved the action of the General Executive Board in revoking the charter of Local 10, it could not entertain a resolution which declared that the General Executive Board had acted illegally. Bloch appealed from this ruling but Jacobson was sustained by a vote of 12 to 10.¹⁸

The issue came before the convention again when the Dyche resolution was reported favorably by the committee. This resolution declared:

Whereas, there are at present in the City of New York at present two local unions in the cutting trade, and

Whereas, the existence of these two Locals is against the constitution of the I. L. G. W. U., be it therefore

Resolved, that the incoming G. E. B. be instructed to withdraw the charter of Local 53 as soon as Local 10 will make proper provisions for accepting the members of Local 53 into their organization.

The difference between the two resolutions is obvious. The first resolution condemned the General Executive Board, vindicated Local 10,

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 45.

restored it to its former status and left the down-town cutters where they were before the charter of Local 10 was revoked. The second resolution said nothing about the legality of the action of the General Executive Board in revoking the charter of Local 10 as the convention had already approved that action, but insisted that the charter of Local 53 should not be revoked unless Local 10 agreed to admit members of Local 53. The resolution of Local 10 made no provision for the members of Local 53. The Dyche resolution did.

The Dyche resolution was rejected by a vote of 10 to 8 when it developed that some members had voted under a misapprehension. The resolution was reconsidered and unanimously adopted whereupon the delegates of Local 10 withdrew.¹⁴

The desertion of the convention by the delegates of Local 10 was deplorable and "In every other way," writes Levine, "the Philadelphia convention was a sad affair. It began with the reading of President Julian's resignation dated May 28, 1908, which was occasioned by the expulsion of Local 10. The 38 delegates who answered the roll call, represented a very small membership. Of these delegates, four men came from Boston and two women from Peekskill.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.

All the others were from New York and from Philadelphia. There were no delegates from Chicago, Baltimore, Cleveland, or any of the other cities represented at previous conventions. Some of the New York delegates could not pay the railroad fare and walked most of the way to the convention city, using interurban trolley-cars part of the way. The reports to the convention were one melancholy tale of disorganization and discouragement. The feeling of depression which filled the hearts of the delegates found expression in a decision to make the conventions of the International biennial instead of annual, and especially in the resolution to amalgamate with the United Garment Workers. Once more the International in a moment of low spirits sought salvation for the workers in the industry in union with the organized workers in the men's clothing industry."¹⁵

The International was near dissolution after this convention while the New York Joint Board was saved from closing its office by eleventh-hour contributions, including \$25 given by the late Meyer London. At the Denver convention of the A. F. of L. in November Cornelius Ford recommended the reorganization of the International and A. B. MacStay, representing the Central Federated Union of New York, intro-

¹⁵*The Women's Garment Workers*, p. 139.

duced a resolution to revoke the charter of the International. This resolution was rejected by the convention which instructed the Executive Council to enforce the Ford decision.¹⁶ In this the Executive Council failed. Ford suggested that Local 10 pay one-half its per capita tax which the local refused. The International then waived this provided Local 10 would pay the per capita from October, 1908. Local 10 declined but offered to pay from January, 1909. The Executive Council then adopted the following resolution:

Resolved, that inasmuch as it is evident that neither party has lived up to the spirit of the award made by Arbitrator Ford, the Executive Council is of the opinion that a fair settlement of the dispute would be that Local No. 10 be reinstated in the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union by the payment of their tax from and including the month of January, 1909; and be it further

Resolved, that if Local No. 10 refuses to abide by this decision, the Central Federated Union of New York City be notified (as per the constitution of the A. F. of L.) to unseat their delegates; and if the International Ladies' Garment Workers refuse to comply with the decision, and issue a charter to Local Union No. 10, the Executive Council will therefore refuse to take further action in this case.¹⁷

This action of the Executive Council became known to Local 10 in October, 1909, and on October 14 its Executive Board declared that it

¹⁶*Proceedings, A. F. of L.,* 1908, pp. 202-203.

¹⁷*Proceedings, A. F. of L.,* 1909, p. 85.

was "unfair and unjust" but it hoped to get a reversal of the decision. The Executive Council met four days later in Washington and Bloch was sent to plead for a reversal and from Washington he reported "progress." However, he failed to change the opinion of the council.

While the Executive Council was reporting the above recommendation to the Toronto convention of the A. F. of L. in November, 1909, President Rosenberg of the International, Harry De Veaux, representing the Central Federated Union of New York, and Herman Robinson, General Organizer of the A. F. of L., were meeting in New York City to arrange some settlement of the controversy. They drew up an agreement which was reported to the Toronto convention and which was approved by the delegates. It provided that Local 10 should be reinstated upon payment of one month's per capita on its present membership; that Local 10 pay an assessment levied at the convention prior to the revocation of the charter, the sum to be paid to be determined by the membership of the local at that time; that Local 10 accept into membership the members of the Cloak and Suit Cutters Union No. 10 (chartered by the International while Local 10 was outside the International) without charging initiation or assessment. The International agreed to transfer to Local 10 the funds held in trust for the Suit Cutters; to recall

the charter of the Suit Cutters and reissue a charter to Local 10 when it ratified the agreement; Local 10 to agree to comply with the constitution of the International.¹⁸

Fortunately, the compromise was acceptable to all concerned and in February, 1910, Local 10 arranged to take in the Suit Cutters, Local 10, mentioned in the agreement, at a meeting in Beethoven Hall on February 23. In the previous August, two members of Local 10 attended a meeting of waist cutters who were being organized by the International. The two members reported that they were thrown out of the hall by a member of the General Executive Board. Now these waist cutters, organized as Local 30, were also to participate in the festivities on February 23 and become members of Local 10. The executive Board ordered 500 sandwiches, a dozen kegs of beer, five boxes of soft drinks and a box of cigars to celebrate the reunion. After a long period of division and strife came a greater Local 10, rejuvenated, with a larger membership, and within its fold many of the cutters who had been fighting for a "place in the sun."

The restoration of Local 10 was a harbinger of a fruitful year for the International itself. The industrial depression which set in, in 1908, was passing when the convention met in Boston in June, 1910. Local 10 was represented by Alex-

¹⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 294-295.

ander Bloch, Jesse P. Cohen, Harry Goldstein, Jesse Greenberger, Samuel Martin and James McCauley. President Rosenberg could report 36 new Locals organized, two reorganized, two amalgamations of Locals and only nine Locals disbanded. To the delegates he could say "I am glad to be able to report that the differences between Local 10 and the International Union have been adjusted and that the cutters have rejoined the International. Judging from present smooth relations the cutters appear to have realized that it is better to be united than separated. There can be no doubt of the benefits both to themselves and to us resulting from a continuance of amicable relations."¹⁹

Moreover, the *Ladies' Garment Worker* had appeared in April, printed in Jewish and English, the Jewish *Daily Forward* and the *New York Call* were credited with valuable aid to the international, finances showed a marked improvement, and the reports of delegates were optimistic. A greater International had also issued out of the strife.

¹⁹*Proceedings*, 1910, pp. 15-16.

CHAPTER VIII

NEW PROBLEMS

The recovery of the International from the prostration which afflicted it was well advanced before Local 10 returned to it. While the final compromise which brought the two bodies together was being approached in the fall of 1909, New York City, witnessed an amazing as well as an inspiring upheaval in the waist and dress industry. This has come to be known as the "Uprising of the Twenty Thousand." This revolt and the acquisition of members it brought to the union was the culmination of a long train of abuses which had become intolerable.

Wages varied from shop to shop, the hours of labor were long, the Saturday half-holiday was unknown, the time or piece-rate basis of payment prevailed according to the caprice of the bosses, inside sub-contracting had become an abomination, and the employes suffered petty persecution. There were also charges for needles and power, charges that generally brought a profit to the employer. It was not unusual for girls to be taxed for the chairs they occupied or

a locker to hold a hat, while petty fines further ate into the small income they received for their labor.

As for the cutters, for many years before the strike apprentice cutters of the immigrant type had been flooding the industry and as they acquired some skill and experience they looked forward to the period when they would apply to the organization of the "aristocrats," the cloak and suit cutters' union, for membership. There had been no union restrictions, rules, or control in the waist and dress industry and it was largely adapted to unskilled or semi-skilled labor known as "section work." The waist was made in sections. The operator sewed the shoulders, the front piece, the back piece, if any, the bottom, if a special machine was used for it, and at times set in the collar. Other section workers were known as sleeve-makers, closer and hemmer, sleeve-setter, button sewer and button-hole maker.

Unskilled labor in making the waist produced a cheap garment for popular wear. Boys employed as "stretchers" eventually became long knife or machine cutters and as the latter quit or were discharged more boys were hired. Cutting rooms in waist shops appeared with as many as fifty or more cutters, few of whom were skilled, while from two to five "markers" were employed, the number depending on the output and

the number of stretchers and cutters. Markers laid out the patterns in the yardage required for making the waist which could be marked for a dozen or more sizes. Markers did nothing but mark. The material then passed to the stretcher who stretched plies according to the orders received and the knife or machine cutter then cut out the "lay." Some experience was required to do the cutting, little was required for stretching, but marking required much skill and experience.

This peculiar character of waist and dress cutting produced three classes of workers in the cutting room. The bosses employed boys for stretching, later advanced them to machine and knife cutting and, finally, to marking. Boys were often hired for three or four dollars a week to stretch. Employers advertised for them and it was not uncommon for bosses to charge ambitious young immigrants for learning the cutting trade. Boys were known to pay \$25 to learn the trade or to work a few weeks for nothing to fit themselves for it and then receive \$4 a week or less. Here was a source of unpaid and ill-paid labor that was very profitable to the bosses and also a means of obtaining skilled cutters for a miserable wage. Boys occasionally received a modest increase in wages, were then passed on to the second grade, and then to the third grade. Naturally, the accomplished marker would demand a competent wage much higher than the

boss desired to pay. He was then discharged, the next youngster was promoted, and thus the workers were caught in a vicious circle of low wages.¹

After a strike of five weeks in the shop of Rosen Brothers in 1909, about 200 waist makers celebrated a victory in September which brought courage and hope to thousands of others. Two other strikes, one against the Triangle Waist Company which had organized a "company union," and the other in the shop of Leiserson, contributed to the uprising in 1909. The Triangle Waist Company discharged several workers suspected of union sympathies and Local 25, Ladies' Waist Makers' Union, declared that the firm had locked out its members and declared a strike against the firm. Hired thugs appeared at the firm of Leiserson and prostitutes at the other firm to intimidate the pickets. These events and the known dissatisfaction of the workers suggested the possibility of a general strike. In October, Local 30 of the New York Waist Cutters was organized and the Triangle Waist Company suggested to other employers the need of an association to meet the situation.

In the same month the Executive Committee of Local 25 decided on a "strategic ruse" to give

¹The above paragraphs on conditions in the waist and dress industry are adapted from interviews with Sam B. Shenker and Elias Lieberman. See Levine's *The Women's Garment Workers*, pp. 146-47.

publicity to the general strike idea. A general meeting was called. "The members of the Executive Committee of the local," writes Levine, "and some of the strikers in Leiserson's shop rose one after another and spoke as if they were delegates from various shops in the trade. They described the 'deplorable' conditions in the shops and one after another declared that only a general strike in the trade could bring about the necessary improvement. The meeting voted in favor of a general strike and appointed a 'committee of five' to put the idea into effect." The publicity in the *Forward* and the English dailies, together with the arrest of some prominent women who volunteered as pickets, gave momentum to the general strike sentiment. A big mass meeting in Cooper Union on November 22 thrilled the waist and dress makers. Among the speakers were Samuel Gompers, Frank Morrison, Mary Dreier, Meyer London, Jacob Panken, J. Goldstein, B. Weinstein, and Max Pine of the United Hebrew Trades. Benjamin Feigenbaum* was chairman.

*Benjamin Feigenbaum is the well-known Jewish Socialist, publicist and lecturer, a student of religious teachings and with a thorough knowledge of Socialism. He was one of the spiritual leaders of the Jewish workers and for a long time a prolific Socialist writer and is respected by thousands of Jewish workmen. At this period he was on the editorial staff of the Jewish *Daily Forward*. The general strike had been planned at the office of the United Hebrew Trades at 151 Clinton street and the group that conceived it in-

Within a few days over 15,000 waist and dress-makers were on strike and over 500 shops were involved. The revolt was so vast and successful that it brought trying problems in enrolling members in the union and organizing them for disciplined strike work. The United Hebrew Trades, the Socialist Party and the New York Branch of the Women's Trade Union League gave their services. Prominent men and women also volunteered. The *Daily Forward* and the *New York Call* opened their columns for con-

vited Feigenbaum to be chairman of the Cooper Union meeting because of the great respect his name commanded among the workers. Among the group that worked out the details of the strike were S. Schindler, Abraham Baroff, B. Frischwasser, B. Weinstein and B. Witashkin, all with interesting careers in the Jewish Labor movement. There was a great difference between men of the Schindler and Witashkin type and the young immigrant masses in the waist trade. This type was no longer "green" while the masses were recent arrivals from Russia and Poland whose spiritual interests were centred in the revolutionary parties of their homelands. Feigenbaum, who was publishing articles in the *Daily Forward* nearly every day on Socialism, was considered a connecting link between the Americanized idealists and the new arrivals. John A. Dyche, who had been educated in England, could not get along with the men who had been brought up in the Jewish section of New York. He was also opposed to the general strike plan. A feature of the meeting over which Feigenbaum presided was the Jewish oath he administered to the 2,000 strikers. With tears in his eyes the workers repeated it, word for word, as Feigenbaum said: "If I turn traitor to the cause I now pledge, may this hand wither from the arm I now raise."—From material submitted by Mr. Harry Lang. Levine, *The Women's Garment Workers*, pp. 151-155, also presents a dramatic account of plans for the strike and the Cooper Union meeting.

tributions to aid the strikers. The Central Federated Union appealed for funds and a system of strike benefits was worked out for those most in need of aid. The abominable conditions that prevailed in the waist and dress shops were aired in the newspapers and the employers were on the defensive. The struggle continued into the following February and 80 per cent of the strikers won improved conditions but its chief importance was in laying the foundation of unionism in the waist and dress trade. In 1910 Local 25 had over 10,000 members.²

The records of the part played by Local 10 in this historic strike are scanty but it must be remembered that it was out of the International the year of the strike and it was not until February, 1910, when the strike was called off, that Local 10 celebrated its return to the International. The Local was not consulted or notified of the strike and when the struggle came to its attention in November it had to define its position. The downtown cutters left the shops but the uptown cutters, Local 10, did not. John C. Ryan declared that it was a question of holding the members of Local 10 together. "The people uptown refused to have anything to do with the downtown cutters," he added, because of their instability, variety of low wage scales and sea-

²This account of the strike is a digest of Chapter XXI of Levine's *The Women's Garment Workers*.

sonal strikes. "They used to get a dollar raise and as soon as the fight was over they would get the bosses to lead them with a band from the hall to the shop and buy them beer and sandwiches," he concluded.

The Executive Board of Local 10 considered the strike on November 26. As the Local had not been notified of the strike it decided that "no member of this Association be permitted to take the place of men on strike." This was good as far as replacing strikers was concerned but the board faced another problem. If Local 10 had any members in shops where other workers and members of the International responded to the strike call, what course should the members of Local 10 follow? In this case the board decided that "all our members now employed shall remain employed until ordered to do otherwise by this Association." The local could not share in making decisions of the International and this no doubt accounts for its attitude on the strike, but the upheaval was also a call to union solidarity. Moreover, the Executive Board was also aware of the terms of the agreement for the local's re-entry into the International, terms which were satisfactory to Local 10. All that remained for the local's return was arrangement of a few details. From these facts it would seem that to permit any members to remain in struck shops until "ordered to do otherwise" was a sur-

vival of an old outlook which had caused much trouble for the cutters.

Whether the recommendation made to Local 10 was adopted by the members is uncertain as the records are missing. At any rate on December 9 the business agent reported that some members of the local had gone to work in houses "where a strike is in progress" and that he had ordered them out. He had also been informed that the cutters of one firm were escorting strikebreakers but later in the month he made another report which is interesting. The business agent had watched the cutters employed by this firm for several days and had not observed any of them escorting strikebreakers into the shop whereupon the board instructed the business agent "to prevent our members acting as escorts to strikebreakers."

Nevertheless, the entries in the minutes of the board regarding this firm, Goldsmith & Co. show that there was a strike in the shop, that strikebreakers were being employed, that members of Local 10 were permitted to work in this shop but were only prohibited from escorting the strikebreakers to their employment.

The American and Americanized cutters still regarded themselves as a special upper group in the industry although there was a constant acquisition of cutters of the progressive type to the industry and the Suit Cutters who were known as

Local 10 until the outlawed cutters returned to the International. There were some dissensions among the members of this small local and the larger one when it returned which grew out of different conceptions of unionism. The administration of Local 10 and its most influential members continued the conservative traditions of the old unionism. They were also active as workers for the Democratic Party while the "new comers" were either Socialists or sympathetic with the Socialist Party. The "new comers" were also rapidly learning English and were thus surmounting a language barrier which had been a considerable handicap to them in previous years.

The policy of the cutters seemed to be to organize in conformity with the branches of work performed by the members. They were influenced in this by the difference in conditions between one branch in the industry and another, the cutters in the cloak and suit line receiving a somewhat higher wage than the cutters in the waist and dress line. There was also a difference in the wages received by waist and dress cutters. Various grades of skill, combined with an old type of restrictive unionism and conservative political beliefs, were a few of the important factors that made Local 10 what it was.³

³The above two paragraphs are in part adapted from an interview with Mr. Elias Lieberman.

The strike in the waist and dress industry was only a partial success. On December 6 the employers accepted a proposal made by Marcus Marks and John Mitchell, former President of the United Mine Workers, to submit the issues to an arbitration board of six, two to represent the employers, two the workers, and these four to select the other two. I. B. Hyman and H. F. Callihan, representing the employers, and John Mitchell and Morris Hillquit, representing the workers, met on December 10, but the employers refused to permit the matter of union recognition to be arbitrated and the negotiations broke down. Ten days later the strike spread to Philadelphia and on December 23 a compromise was reached in New York but was rejected by an overwhelming vote of the strikers on December 27 and the struggle continued into the following year.

On January 11, 1910, the union again offered to arbitrate the issues but the manufacturers refused and on February 15 the strike was declared off. The union had settled with 339 firms, 19 on a compromise basis; 1,000 workers remained on strike in 13 shops, while over 300 of the firms that had settled accepted the union's terms. The more important concessions made by the settled firms were shorter hours, abolition of charges for needles, thread and other supplies, division of work in slack periods, and four legal holidays

with full pay. While not a complete success, the strike paved the way to larger conquests by the union later.

The strike of 1909 was followed by the still greater strike of 1910 in the cloak and suit trade the outcome of which was the signing of the agreement known as "The Protocol of Peace." Local 10 had joined the Joint Board which consisted of nine Locals and it played a more consistent part in this notable struggle which involved from 50, to 60,000 workers in the industry. One of the last entries to be found in the records of the Executive Board for this year is that of June 16 when the business agent reported the arrangements being made for the remarkable mass meeting of strikers which was held in Madison Square Garden on June 28. In the following month a vote of the Locals was taken and by a vote of 18,771 to 615 the greatest general strike in the history of the union was declared by the members which began on July 7. Prior to the strike the Joint Board and Local 10 held meetings every night after work hours at which some business agent or picked members prepared the workers for the strike. The first "red-letter" circular was issued by the Joint Board on July 7 and workers in the various shops were told where they should go, the cutters reporting to Webster Hall.

The cutters, again united with the Interna-

tional, played a leading and very effective role in this struggle. Up to the time of the strike the membership had fluctuated from 600 to 1,000 and the initiation fee had been reduced from \$5 to \$1 for a limited period to increase the membership. Several thousand cutters joined the union and the impression was general that they were organized 100 per cent. While the increase was substantial this was an over estimate. The large number of new members provided Local 10 with a big treasury and made the cutters a powerful factor in the strike. Suspicion still survived between tailors and cutters but the latter's long training in organization and the conduct of the strikes made the cutters respected and won for them admiration for their efficiency in this important struggle.

Jesse Greenberg was President of Local 10 and Alexander Bloch was Business Agent but as the latter was placed on the Settlement Committee with Charles W. Serrington, Jesse Cohen temporarily performed the duties of Bloch's office. Samuel Martin, James McCauley and Jesse Cohen were general supervisors while Max Hyman and Nat Baron served on the Law Committee. Webster Hall became the strike hall of the cutters with "Dolly" Levine as chairman. Meetings were held every day of the strike, the attendance being about 2,000 at each meeting and some members found it impossible to get

into the hall. The main speakers were Martin and Cohen but occasionally others like Samuel Gompers, Frank Morrison and Myer London were obtained. Enthusiasm ran high and there was an eagerness to serve on the part of members which showed a keen appreciation of the importance of this great strike.

There was no mass meeting but it was not unusual for pickets to remain at their posts for 24 hours. So eager were cutters to serve as pickets that all who volunteered could not be used. There appeared to be a rivalry by *members* to give their services and long hours did not deter those who were given something to do. There were no fees of \$5, \$8, or \$10 paid cutters for strike work. Their compensation was a sandwich and a cup of coffee and possibly a small sum spent for car fare and necessary incidentals. The highest price paid for strike duty was \$2 and this was an exception, not a rule. Meetings were held in Webster Hall for nine weeks at a total cost of \$147. No particular sum was paid for strike relief but any member in distress was helped. As a rule, \$5 was the maximum sum paid those in need of relief. The devotion and sacrifice by members of Local 10 in the strike of 1910 are among the best traditions of its history.

Martin, Cohen, Bloch, McCauley and Serington participated in the general conferences

and the cutters accepted the first agreement but the tailors were opposed. The minimum wage demanded for cutters was \$26 per week and skirt cutters, \$22. The Manufacturers' Association offered machine cutters, \$25; regular cutters, \$25; canvass cutters, \$12; skirt cutters, \$20. Due to the opposition of the tailors the first conference broke up and a leading manufacturer obtained a temporary injunction which went before Justice Goff for argument. He granted the injunction which declared that the strike was for the closed shop, that it was illegal and that even peaceful picketing was illegal, but on September 2, "The Protocol of Peace" was signed and the strike came to an end. The cutters received an increase of \$1.

Compared with the other Locals there were very few scabs among the cutters and Local 10 provided the most active and efficient pickets. When the tailors were in need of assistance in getting workers out of a shop or preventing workers from returning, the pickets of Local 10 were generally expected to get the best results. Excellent work was done by the cutters in guarding the out of town shops.

One interesting result of the strike was the disclosure of foul conditions in which a certain type of workers worked. These were known as "pile fabric cutters." They were working from 60 to 70 hours per week and for \$9 to \$14 per

week. In hot weather they had to strip to under-wear and overalls. Health hazards were frightful. The cutting tables averaged 60 to 70 feet long on which were piled layers of cloth from 10 to 12 inches high. These tables accumulated a thick layer of dust which was generally swept off with a ruler or a piece of cloth. The dust, combined with the heat in unsanitary and ill-ventilated shops, made the work almost unbearable. The conditions were ideal for pulmonary diseases. It was a common saying in these abominable dens that when a cutter sneezed he blew a garment through his nose. The strike of 1910 came as a God-send to these cutters. Their conditions were materially improved and the wage increase for them was greater than the increase granted to other workers. The agreement also provided for semi-annual increases for these cutters and it required two years to bring them up to the union standard.

It is not within the scope of this history to record all the terms of the Protocol and the events that led up to its signing. This belongs to the larger history of the industry and the International and may be consulted in Levine's *The Women's Garment Workers*, Chapter XXII. A summary of its results for the men and women workers may be presented here.

"As finally drafted," writes Levine, "the Protocol abolished inside sub-contracting, charges

for power, and time contracts with individual employees. It established ten legal holidays with full pay for week workers, a regular weekly payday, payment of wages in cash. It introduced the preferential union shop and provided for the settlement of disputes by a committee on grievances and by a board of arbitration. It established in the industry a joint board of sanitary control.

"The concessions which the strikers gained by holding out were fivefold. Firstly, they obtained a fifty-hour working week. Secondly, they were granted double pay for overtime. Thirdly, the minimum scale of wages for week workers was from \$1 to \$3 higher than the scale proposed by the manufacturers at the first conference. Fourthly, price committees in the shops for the fixing of piece-rates were allowed. Fifthly, in the matter of the preferential shop a change was made in favor of the workers."⁴

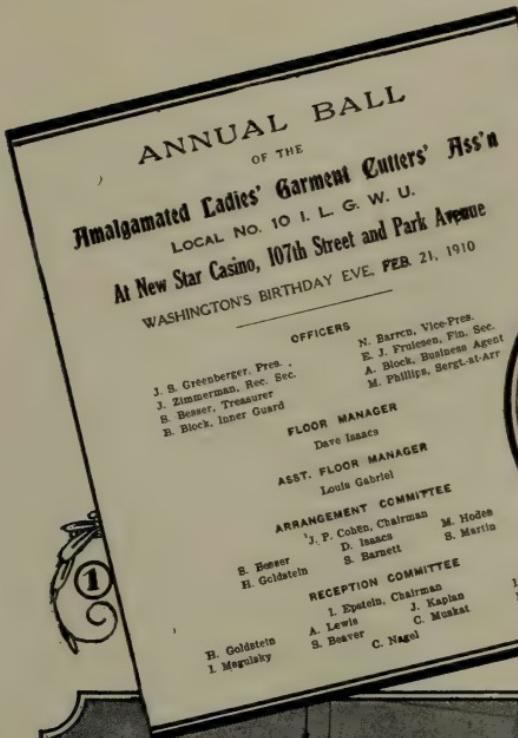
In 1911 Local 10 was called on to render assistance in a struggle outside of New York. An important strike in Cleveland in 1904 had been a failure because of its desertion by the cutters which ended in the disruption of the unions. Following the strike in New York in 1910 the International decided to bring Cleveland conditions up to the New York standards and a general strike was called in that city but re-

⁴Levine, p. 194.

remembering the disaster of 1904 the International sent two representatives of Local 10 to Cleveland to assist in the strike. An effective corps of pickets was organized and drilled, Local 10 contributed funds, and only two cutters returned to work during the strike. The strike lasted 22 weeks and ended in a defeat for the workers, but it paved the way to organization seven years later.

The New York and Cleveland strikes won admiration for the cutters because of their courage as pickets, their discipline, organization and achievements. One reason for this was the new type of immigrants that came into the industry and the union from 1905 to 1910 compared with the immigrants of the '80's. Down to the '70's between thirty and forty thousand Jewish workers came to New York. Few were of the intellectual class and most of them were employed as tailors in the men's clothing industry. The cloakmakers were few in number as the industry had not assumed the importance it did later. The intellectuals sent their children to the public schools but rarely permitted them to continue their education. A few Jewish students attended the College of the City of New York but they were chiefly sons of German Jews. There were no high schools. Naturally, the children of immigrants spoke English and after graduating they generally went into business.

OUT OF THE PAST



1, Journal of the Cutters' ball in 1910. 2 and 3. Both sides of watch fob distributed to cutters on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of Local 10 in 1911. 4. An old emblem of Local 6 in the 90's. 5. An old cutting room, previous to 1910; cutters employed are: (1) J. Blind; (2) C. Muskat; (3) S. Barnett; (4) J. W. Settle; (5) J. Marlow; (6) N. Baron; (7) I. Epstein; (8) E. Buquet; (9) E. Blend; (10) L. Burke; (11) L. Freedman.

An impression prevailed that most Jewish immigrants had criminal records but this is denied emphatically by Abraham Cahan. The great majority in the period of 1870-1880 were ignorant but honest. Crimes were so few among them that when the notorious Rubinstein murder occurred it shocked the residents of the entire Jewish quarter. This type of ignorant but honest Jews continued to enter New York throughout the '80's together with a small percentage of intellectuals who fled from pogroms which overwhelmed the Jews in Russia. They had intended to found communist colonies in America.

Those who entered the cloak industry were, (1) cloak operators including intellectuals many of whom were well informed on Biblical and Talmudic lore and who learned how to operate a sewing machine after their arrival; (2) tailors who had worked as ladies' tailors in the old country but who had little education; (3) pressers, strong, husky men, who had been blacksmiths, drivers, porters, or rural laborers—a low element of the Jews of that period. These pressers would occasionally break into a union office and attack members of the executive with chairs, whose members were compelled to flee through windows and hold their meetings in secret. This conduct was not necessarily vicious but was considered as "sport" by the pressers. However, they were also anxious to demonstrate

that the "ring-leaders" were afraid of the pressers, i. e., the rank and file. In their homeland it was a common practice for a person of some importance to slap workingmen on the cheek which implied a certain social subordination by workers to their "betterers." Knowing this custom, Joseph Barondess, when leader of the union, would often call an unruly presser before him and administer a slap with the result that the pressers' respect for him increased! On one occasion a presser who had been slapped told Abraham Cahan: "It is an honor for me to be slapped by a man like Mr. Barondess."

The immigration after 1900 brought another type to America. These were young Jewish men and women from Russia and Poland who had experience in the Bund, a general Jewish labor organization in Lithuania, Poland and Russia, and other revolutionary parties. The early years of the twentieth century constituted the Renaissance period of Jewish life. A progressive nationalistic movement, the blossoming of Yiddish literature and Yiddish culture exerted a magnetic influence on young Jews and, inspired by this Renaissance, they came to the United States. The shops in the ladies' garment industry witnessed a marked change under the influence of the young men and women of the intelligenzia. Yearning for their homeland, they found an outlet for it in literature and discussions of theories

and programs of the revolutionary movements. In the homeland most of the young intellectuals had not worked at manual tasks and the rest had been employed as artisans in small shops. The great factory in America, its never-ceasing roar of machines and labor discipline, filled the Jewish youth with pain. They welcomed strikes as forerunners of the "social revolution" which would free them from wage slavery. Had they not read this in every "proclamation" secretly distributed by the revolutionary parties in Russia?

These new types of immigrants differed much from the old types but they also remained a strange element to the cutters. Americanized cutters would not consider it an honor to be slapped by a person of importance. On the other hand, they did not regard their union or strikes as revolutionary agencies. Calling a meeting of the cutters was a matter of union routine but the Jewish workers issued such calls in terms of the "proclamations" which called the Russian masses to rise against the tyranny of the Czar. This conception of the union made union activities sacred with them. Young Russian immigrants remembered the Fighting Battalion, a selected group of heroes who risked their lives to guard secret meetings of revolutionaries from police raids. Here they regarded picket committees in the same light

and the cutters had proved to be excellent strike pickets. In fact, young Russian immigrants referred to these pickets as the "American Fighting Battalion" and expressed great admiration for them but the old cutters and new comers were still far from understanding each other.

As the immigrants became more familiar with the old cutters they were surprised to learn that the leaders were often helped by members of Tammany clubs and this shocked the immigrants. They asked themselves how fighters for the working class could also be friendly with Tammany Hall and further inquiry convinced them that strikers received protection for their pickets and strike activities in general. This resulted in a feeling of respect for the leaders of the cutters. As the memories of the homeland became less pronounced the immigrants became more and more interested in American life and its problems. Devoted to the ideals of the labor movement, and to Socialism as the soul of the movement, they sought to coordinate their activities with the cause of American workers instead of yielding to reminiscences of the revolutionary parties abroad. Thus Americanization proceeded in the ranks of the cutters.*

*The above paragraphs on the contacts between the immigrants and Americanized cutters have been adapted by me from material drawn by Mr. Harry Lang from Cahan's *Reminiscences*.

CHAPTER IX

A SICK INDUSTRY

Here it is necessary to pause in our narrative of the history of Local 10 to give attention to some of the problems of the ladies' garment industry which were beginning to assume an alarming aspect for the unions. With this background we will be able to better understand the subsequent history of the local itself.

A number of studies have been made of these problems which are so many and so complicated that no satisfactory solution has been offered that promises stabilization and order in the industry. One of the fundamental causes of the continuance of disorder despite most thorough organization of the workers is the survival of something like the shop production of the colonial era which we considered in Chapter I. To appreciate the effect of this factor it is necessary to recall some phases of the shop production of the period of the American Revolution and the changes that followed.

For the purposes of this analysis we may take the production of clothing and shoes. At first the tailor and shoemaker were itinerant crafts-

men who went from home to home of their customers, often living with the family while completing their jobs. At a later period the workman established a shop, often a room in his own home, and provided the raw materials where formerly the customer had provided them. In the case of the tailor, equipped with the needle, thread and cloth, and the shoemaker, possessing the hammer, awl, wax, last and pegs, shop production was a simple process in which the workman was helped by a few apprentices who desired to become master craftsmen.

It is not necessary to trace this simple form of colonial production through the various stages of the enlarged shop, the manufactory, the factory and then the great plant of modern times. It is sufficient to note the difference in the expansion and development of the tools in tailoring and shoemaking. Invention took the tools out of the hands of the shoemaker, transformed them into elaborate and costly machines and installed them in great plants occupying acres of ground. With the passing of the tools out of the hands of the shoemaker into the hands of the owners of the great plants the economic status of the workers in the industry became fixed. They became permanent wage workers with no prospect whatever of ever owning either machinery or plants.

Not so with the garment industry. The sim-

ple tools of the tailor have also changed but the change has not been so marked as in the case of the shoemaker's tools. On the whole they still remain simple and adapted to the possession and use of individual workmen as in the colonial period. In shoemaking the machinery has become collective in character, no longer adapted to the possession or use of the individual workman. The machines are too costly for the shoemaker to purchase and for him to attempt to establish himself in a small shop in competition with the great plant would be ridiculous.¹

It is otherwise in the garment industry. It is true that the sewing machine has largely displaced the hand needle but it does not cost many thousands of dollars nor a large and costly plant to install it. The shears and the hand knife of the cutter have been succeeded by a rotary wheel knife for cutting layers of garment but like the sewing machine it can be obtained for \$100 and up. So with the other instruments in the ladies' garment industry. They are still simple, comparatively cheap, and capable of being possessed by workers who can save or borrow a few hundred dollars and set up in business for themselves.

The garment industry, therefore, in contrast

¹The contrast in the development of shoemaking with the evolution of tailoring and other trades may be consulted in Hazard's *Organization of the Boot and Shoe Industry in Massachusetts Before 1875* and Tryon's *Household Manufactures in the United States*.

with shoemaking, provides an example of arrested development. The small capital required to go into business is a constant temptation to workers and a swarm of contractors. A loft or a basement or a room in a home offers sufficient room for the installment of a few machines. Many adventurers in the industry are snuffed out each year in the keen and deadly competition but others gamble in the hope of winning where others fail.

This persistence of the colonial type of production in the twentieth century tends to undermine the basis of the larger firms. The union is compelled to watch the employers and its members to prevent them from violating its rules, to preserve union standards of wages, hours and sanitary conditions which required many years to build up. What is called the "social shop" soon became a constant evil. A few members contribute their savings to a common fund and purchase machines. They work in the shops and employ other workers, but the competition is so keen that there is a constant tendency to ignore union standards in order to get as much out of a season as possible.

Then there are the contractors, jobbers and sub-contractors who are constantly grabbing opportunities, who are difficult to classify and who, for that reason, tend to escape responsibility for conditions in the industry. They occupy

a twilight zone between an employer and an agent, a position so illusive that it baffles definition. Local 10 was giving consideration to the problem of the sub-contractor in the period we are considering. As an important question it developed soon after the general strike of 1910. In the fall of 1914 the cutters were discussing the problem in their meetings and in *The Ladies' Garment Cutter*. The cloak and suit cutters met separately early in November and instructed the Executive Board to put an end to cutting done by sub-manufacturers who were regarded as "disguised contractors." A pamphlet of the United Manufacturers' Association had appeared which declared that the Joint Board was responsible for sub-contracting because it insisted on such union rates in the inside shops that garments could not be produced in these shops. Samuel Martin of Local 10 agreed with this reasoning and urged that Local 10 withdraw from the Joint Board and the local "be run in the interest of Local 10 only."

This suggestion was characteristic of the old conservative unionism. Martin proposed to meet the problem by running away from it. If the disintegrating tendency of sub-manufacturing was to be grappled with it would require the co-operation of all the unions in the industry. The Martin proposal was to supplement the divisive tendency in the industry with a divisive policy in

the unions. Moreover, as editor Rosenberg pointed out, sub-contracting had appeared "long before the closer affiliation with the Joint Board" and the closer affiliation was affected because of the divisive tendency in the industry. To withdraw from the Joint Board would not render Local 10 stronger to cope with the evil.²

The necessity of closer affiliation had arisen some months before. In July a hundred members of Local 10 had petitioned for a special meeting to take up the matter as the number of small manufacturers had so increased that it strained the resources of the local's business agents to care for the interests of the union. The Joint Board had a staff of 52 agents controlling shops of the Protective, United and Independent houses and by complete affiliation of the local and payment of per capita tax to the Joint Board the cutters would be drawn closer to the other workers and in turn obtain the effective cooperation of the Joint Board's agents. But if something like the colonial shop survived, something of the old conservative cutter psychology also survived in objections to the closer affiliation. "For reasons unaccountable," wrote one advocate of complete cooperation, "the cutter seems to regard himself as an aristocrat of the trade and will not

²*The Ladies' Garment Cutter*, October 24, November 7 and 14, 1914.

*take orders from a business agent who, before election, was a mere tailor, presser or finisher."¹³ Late in the month of July after a long discussion in a general meeting of the members the principle of closer affiliation was approved and a committee of seven Nathan Ross, Edward Fine, Louis Brown, Alex Gorenstein, Mayer Scharp, Jesse Greenberger and Elmer Rosenberg was appointed to confer with the Joint Board. The conference agreed on the following terms of affiliation: (1) Local 10 to pay the same per capita tax as other locals except for the *New Post*; (2) the Joint Board to appoint four business agents for Local 10 from the list of agents chosen at its last election; (3) the next election of business agents of Local 10 to be on the same basis as before; (4) all complicated cutter questions to be adjusted by cutter business agents; (5) shop chairmen to control books of cutters, report men in arrears, boys working at table, bosses doing their own cutting, and houses where no cutters are employed; (6) cutters to attend shop meetings with tailors when shop chairman considers it necessary; (7) Local 10 to pay per capita on 3,000 members until cloak, suit and skirt cutters are sub-divided into two branches; (8) after the sub-division the number of business agents to be appointed by the local to be taken up, in the meantime Local 10 to accept rules and regula-

¹³The Ladies' Garment Cutter, July 18, 25, August 1, 1914.

tions of the Joint Board. This was ratified by the members on August 10 and became effective on August 31.⁴

The new relationship, however, was abandoned some months later. Officials of Local 10 did not favor it, the administrative machinery of the Joint Board did not work to the satisfaction of the cutter business agents and even the members of Local 10 became lukewarm and the local returned to the old system.

The jobber was also becoming an acute problem. He is not the jobber we know in other industries. He is an indirect manufacturer. He purchases the materials and farms out the production to small manufacturers who follow his instructions regarding style. To the extent that he owns the materials he is a capitalist in the transaction but when the materials pass into other hands he avoids the responsibility of the employer.

The industry is also afflicted with sudden changes in style which can never be anticipated and which make the competition all the more hazardous. Few people outside the industry understand how the freaks of fashion in women's apparel bring anxiety to many thousands in the industry. Shops may contract for the production of a certain style and by the time the goods are ready for the market a sudden change in

⁴*Ibid.*, August 8, 15, 1914.

taste makes necessary a change in design, involving waste and loss, or confusion in one form or another. If style does not change it may be a preference for a certain fineness of texture that will upset market calculations. When this occurs there is a feverish struggle to adjust production to the changing taste.⁵

In this confusing welter of factors, forces and tendencies the Protocol, which was the first comprehensive program for stabilizing the industry, tended to be undermined. It required a union of men and women united by the closest solidarity to check the disintegrating forces which menaced the stable firms and the union itself. While Local 10 was establishing closer official relations with the Joint Board it also came to consider the problem of more efficient organization. The large increase in membership with cutters receiving varying rates of wages according to the department of the industry in which each class worked suggested the sub-division of the local into a number of branches. Late in 1911 and early in 1912 a committee of Local 10 had been organizing the cutters in the ladies' waist, dress, costume and underwear trades. Advertisements were printed in the Jewish Daily Forward and circulars were distributed and on January 30, 1912, a mass meeting was held in Astoria Hall

*The new industrial problems are considered in detail by Levine in *The Women's Garment Workers*, Chap. XXXII.

and these cutters were organized. In March, they were amalgamated with Local 10.

At the close of the year 1912, a new strike movement appeared. The International undertook to organize the whole waist and dress industry, the white goods trade (ladies' underwear), and the wrapper, kimono and children's dress trades. It also conferred with important manufacturers in the hope of obtaining a "protocol" similar to the one in the cloak trade. In these campaigns the cutters rendered valuable assistance. In the white goods, wrapper, kimono and children's dress trades a majority of the workers were girls and over 50 per cent were Jewish immigrants. These girls were the first to respond to the appeals of the International. They spoke and read Yiddish and the *Daily Forward* and the United Hebrew Trades played an important part in the movement. The latter supplied speakers and the former extensive propaganda. The cloakmakers had a large union, the men's tailors were organizing, and the girls came from the families of tailors. The Jewish sections were seething with activity and the *Daily Forward* appealed to fathers in the cloak and men's clothing trades to urge their daughters and nieces to join the union. A powerful organization drive followed on the whole front and Local 10 became an important agency of trade union propaganda.

Interested in all branches of the industry, Local 10 required a representative at shop and mass meetings of the allied trades and supplied English speakers. The Women's Trade Union League also gave important assistance. Local 10 came to an understanding with the Locals whose members spoke Yiddish and its speakers became interpreters for English-speaking workers. Local 48 performed a similar service for the Italian workers. The leaders of Local 10 who rendered important aid to the other Locals were Pierce, Martin, Epstein and Jesse Cohen. Occasionally their speeches were not adapted to their audience. An amusing instance was the speech of Jesse Cohen at a meeting of girls in the white goods trade. A Cooper Union meeting failed to accommodate the masses and an overflow meeting was held at the Labor Temple at Second avenue and Fourteenth street. An impending strike had aroused great enthusiasm and the Yiddish speakers, Socialist idealists, stressed the inspiring spirit that animated the labor movement. Following a number of these speeches Cohen took the floor and in substance said: "Girls, listen to what I am going to tell you. When I become a grandfather I shall sit by the fireplace and warm my old bones. On my knee will sit my grandchild and I will say to him, 'Kiddo, I have never walked the streets of New York without a pistol in my pocket.'"

That was sufficient for the girls who were seized with fear. Cohen's intention was to encourage the girls so that they would not fear to serve on the picket lines with the intimation that the cutters would protect them if molested. Their interpretation, however, was quite different. Instead of a spiritual experience the girls had visions of fights which shocked them but when the strike came they were equal to their responsibilities. Hired ruffians of the bosses attempted to intimidate the girl pickets but they found ample protection given by the cutters.

The strike ended with collective agreements with the manufacturers associations but an abnormal situation developed in some large shops. A firm as a member of an association was obligated to maintain union conditions but its workers did not belong to the union.

This was especially true where American-born or Americanized girls were employed. Although they had participated in the strike they declined to join the union and no solution of this problem was found while the agreements were being negotiated. The agreements contained no clause preventing a member of an employers' association from employing non-union workers. With such a clause such firms would have retired from the association, leaving no trace of union conditions in their shops and in turn would have caused competition with shops that

maintained union conditions. Assistance rendered by the cutters solved this perplexing problem for while other branches of the trade in such shops were unorganized the cutters were unionized. Local 62, for example, would have no members in this sort of shop but the cutting department was organized and as Local 10 was a party to the collective agreement the firm had to retain its membership in the employers' association and maintain union conditions in other departments of the shop even if workers of these departments remained outside of the union.

In the strike of the white goods workers of 1913 the cotton goods manufacturers organized an association of which Dudley D. Sicher, an important manufacturer, became president. About 500 workers were employed in his factory but only four Jewish girls and the cutters joined the strike. Except for these girls practically the entire force consisted of American workers. Sicher could have ignored the strike but the cutters effectively picketed the factory while he also believed in collective bargaining. When the association signed an agreement with Locals 62 and 10 and the International, Sicher's factory became, nominally, a union shop, but with the exception of the four Jewish girls and the cutters the workers refused to join the union. The rest of the workers were so fanatically opposed to the union that when the four Jewish

girls returned to work the other workers placed small American flags on their machines and notified Sicher that they would not work with the four union members. The non-union workers even threatened to strike if the firm bargained with the union! On the other hand the agreement obligated members of the association to help organize their workers and Sicher invited union representatives to arrange a meeting in his factory. Miss Rose Schneiderman, representing Local 62, and John Pierce of Local 10, accepted the invitation. Sicher had the electric power shut off so the speakers could be heard but the non-union workers refused to listen and left the shop. Explaining their conduct to Sicher later, the workers declared that the union was composed of foreigners and Russian-Jewish Socialists, and that the four girl strikers were Russian Jews. The Sicher cutters, all young Americans, defended the immigrants and the union. To this day these American girls refuse to join the union, yet due to Local 10, they enjoyed union conditions!

In the same year, 1913, the problem of organizing the out-of-town shops arose. In the "light" trades the worker required no skill, labor was cheaper in the smaller cities and towns, girl employes merely desired spending money, unionism was rarely popular, and was opposed by storekeepers, the clergy, the police and in-

fluential people in general. Only a certain type of union organizer was adapted for these communities and Local 10 furnished the agitators. Committees of Local 10 obtained the cooperation of other unions in the town and the aid of organizers of the American Federation of Labor. In the small town the active union leader often held a public office and had considerable political influence and Local 10's emissaries obtained the cooperation of these town union leaders while the cutter leaders were a refutation of the charge that the International represented "a bunch of foreigners and trouble makers." Charles Nagel especially distinguished himself in towns where labor agitators were hounded by the police. His son was a policeman and from him he learned how to approach a town policeman and establish friendly relations. Thus members of Local 10 became effective workers in out-of-town organization work.

In the days of piece-work and at present most shop troubles have occurred in the operators' and finishers' departments and these disputes pour into union headquarters, sometimes resulting in protracted shop strikes. As part of the shop force the cutters must share these troubles. This is also true of the pressers, which accounts for closer relations between the pressers and the cutters than between them and other workers in the industry. For similar reasons

the operators and finishers maintain very sympathetic relations. Cutters have often complained that the "buck" is passed on to them by some other branch when it does not obtain desired concessions.

In the cloak trade and later in the dress trade there were Joint Boards to protect union conditions in the shops and the cutters could enforce claims of their members, but no Joint Board was organized in the "light" trades after the strike of 1913. Local 62 claimed Local 10 appeared indifferent to the white goods trade. The same may be said of Local 41 of the wrapper and kimono makers and Local 50 of the children's dress makers. When local administrations found it difficult to obtain demands they often charged the cutters with indifference, claiming that the leaders of the cutters were too conservative and the complaints continued for some time after the "new comers" and Socialists rose to power in Local 10.*

By the end of the year 1912, Local 10 had some 6,000 members and it became unwieldly for the transaction of business. The number of different crafts represented, each one occasionally bringing up some special question with which cutters were not very familiar, as well as the difficulty of seven business agents tending to thousands of shops, made necessary

*Adapted from material submitted by Mr. Harry Lang.

some changes in organization. Late in 1913 the question of subdividing the local into a number of branches became an issue, and it was generally discussed the following year. One member suggested a division into four trade branches, (1) cloak and suit cutters, (2) waist and dress cutters, (3) wrapper and kimono cutters, (4) underwear cutters, all under the supervision of a Joint Board representing the branches and one set of general officers for all the cutters.⁶ In October Editor Rosenberg wrote that six years before Local 10 had about 500 members and nine officials to serve it but the membership had increased twelve times and the greater membership had about six types of cutters and it was impossible for nine men to look after the interest of all these members. He urged two large divisions of the cutters, one into cloaks and suits, the other into waists and dresses, and a smaller division to include all the other cutters.⁷

Despite the need of some change in the form of organization it was not until 1915 that a change was made. In February a Committee on Revision of the Constitution recommended certain changes among which was a proposal to sub-divide the local into three branches as suggested by Rosenberg, each with a business

⁶*The Ladies' Garment Cutter*, March 21, 1914

⁷*Ibid.*, October 10, 1914.

FIRST SUCCESS OF "NEW COMERS"

THE LADIES' GARMENT CUTTER

OFFICIAL BULLETIN OF
Amalgamated Ladies' Garment Cutters' Association

LOCAL No. 10, I. L. G. W. U.

Address with A. F. & L. and C. P. U.
McNamee Optical Products, 609 and 709a, 14th Street
Established at Second Chance Market, February 1, 1913, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of August 1, 1912.McNamee Optical Products, 609 and 709a, 14th Street
Established at Second Chance Market, February 1, 1913, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of August 1, 1912.

Vol. 11

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, JANUARY 2, 1914

No. 1

Election Results in Complete Change of Main Officers

ELMER ROSENBERG • • •
JESSE P. COHEN • • •

Elected President and Editor
Business Manager

The popular interest in the election has resulted in the polling of the highest vote ever recorded since the inception of Local 10. There were 1201 ballots cast when the polls were closed at 10 P. M. on Monday.

For President:	Charles Bergida	373	Fred Leroder	174
Elmer Rosenberg	Henry Singer	763	Louis Plosky	441
John C. Ryan	Julian Bender	714	Jack Michaels	333
For Editor:	Nathan Baron	644	Joseph Shorr	399
Elmer Rosenberg	Max Stern	581	Max Rosenberg	450
Indore Epstein	Charles Beaver	577	Max Goldin	301
For Business Manager:	Harry Goldstein	523	Harry Blum	192
Jesse P. Cohen	Julius Samuels	407	Albert Lazarus	184
Samuel Martin	Charles Nagle	435	George Schaff	78
	Benjamin Levy	477	Resmania Beckman	69

LOCAL NO. 10 TO AID MEMBERS OF MAIL DRIVERS AND
CHAUFFEURS UNION

LABOR ECONOMIC PLATFO

manager, executive board and its quota of business agents. Each branch was to have its own meetings and a general meeting of all the cutters was to be held once each month. The committee also recommended increasing the membership of the Executive Board of Local 10 from nine to fifteen members, five from each branch. In April the sub-division was agreed to.⁸

Of equal importance was the establishment of *The Ladies' Garment Cutter* in 1913. The first number of this weekly publication of Local 10 appeared on November 29. For some months a comparatively small portion of the members came to the general membership meetings and it was thought that a weekly organ of the cutters would aid in stimulating interest in the meetings, educate the members, provide a weekly forum for the discussion of important questions and develop a more enlightened membership. The cost of reaching the members by mail had averaged \$46.86 per week and the committee estimated the cost of the weekly at \$90 per week. By assessing the members one cent per week an income of \$80 would be realized and the deficit of \$10 could be made up by accepting a few advertisements. This proposal was accepted by the members on December 1 and *The Ladies' Garment Cutter* continued to be the organ of Local 10 till January, 1919. Ex-

⁸*Ibid.*, February 27, April 17, 1915.

cept the first number it consisted of four pages, each 14x10½, and four columns to the page. Beginning with February 27, 1915, the pages were enlarged to 16x11½. For five years *The Ladies' Garment Cutter* rendered valuable service to the members in educating them regarding the problems of the industry and the union.

A rather amusing situation developed regarding editorial policy which came to a head in March, 1914, when Editor Rosenberg was compelled to give it some attention. Under the caption of "Three Types of Minds" he commented upon four letters he had received, three of which appeared on the same page with the editorial. The first letter he mentioned without printing, saying that the writer had accused him of editing a Socialist organ by running a certain article. It so happened that the objectionable article had been written by Samuel Gompers! The second writer asked the same question and was answered that it was an organ of the cutters but that organized workers could not ignore other problems outside the trade, especially the question of political action. The third writer asserted that he was a "good Tammany Democrat" and objected to the advertisement of cutting machines on the ground that they displaced cutters. The fourth writer commended the editor for reprinting an article on unemployment from the Jewish *Daily Forward*, adding that it

was a type of contribution that was educational. The variety of views suggests the trials that always face every editor.

Equal distribution of work also became a problem of the union in this period. Equity required that during slack seasons the available employment should be divided on some equitable basis. A referendum of the members in 1913 in which about 5,000 votes were cast revealed a substantial majority in favor of this policy. In March, 1914, a committee reported a program for its realization which may be briefly summarized as follows: (1) in slack seasons, no cutter to be discharged, the members to receive a week's work in rotation; (2) first week of employment a trial week and, if satisfactory, the cutter to share with other men; (3) distribution to apply to all cutters except where five or more are employed, when the firm shall employ one cutter steadily giving his time to general overseeing, pattern grading, pattern making, special marking and special cutting; (4) in the cloak and suit trade equitable distribution to apply only to members receiving the full scale (\$25), except in the case of canvass cutters whose work shall be divided between those employed; (5) in the waist and dress, white goods and under-wear, kimonos and wrappers, children's dresses, infants' and children's reefers, and raincoat trades, equal distribution to apply to all grades,

except that one full scale (\$25) cutter to be employed in preference to other grades; (6) permission is given employers to discharge any or all cutters at the beginning of the season, about January 1 and July 1; (7) a standing committee of three to be appointed to investigate and adjust disputes.⁹

More than a year passed and a committee of five which was to take the matter up with the employers did little and Editor Rosenberg called attention to it in August, 1915. The Council of Conciliation set up by Mayor Mitchel had approved the principle of equitable division of work as a measure of "common humanity and good sense" and Rosenberg urged that renewed efforts be made to realize it. In November, 1914, Morris Hillquit had presented the case for equitable distribution for the Joint Board and the International before the Board of Grievances which could not agree and it went before the Board of Arbitration which rendered a decision in January, 1915. While approving of equitable division of work in principle this body did not formulate a working plan and it proved of little value. This problem and others went back to the International and the Protective Association and a number of conferences failed to reach an agreement. In May the deadlock reached a crisis when the Protective Asso-

**The Ladies' Garment Cutter*, March 14, 1914.

ciation abrogated the Protocol. Five days before this breach the Grand Jury indicted a number of leading men or officials of the union, including A. Baroff, H. Kleinman, J. Halpern, S. Lefkovits, and A. Silver who were admitted to bail. Eight others were held on a charge of murder. They were Morris Sigman, Julius Wolf, Morris Stupniker, Louis Holzer, Sol Metz, A. Wedinger, Max Singer and I. Ashpis. District Attorney Perkins obtained "confessions" from gangsters intended to implicate the accused men. To many union men it appeared that there was some relation between the action of the Protective Association and the office of the District Attorney. A general strike was threatened when Mayor Mitchel appointed a Council of Conciliation of six persons, Dr. Felix Adler, Louis D. Brandeis, Henry Bruere, George W. Kirchwey, Charles L. Bernheimer and Judge Walter C. Noyes. The council granted some concessions to the workers but it also refrained from working out a plan of equitable division of work although in vague terms approving the principle.¹⁰ In December, 1915, Editor Rosenberg reported on this issue that the delegates to the Joint Board had "finally succeeded in bringing the matter before that body

¹⁰The reader should consult Levine, *The Women's Garment Workers*, Chap. XXVII, for a more detailed account of the issues involved in and related to equitable distribution of work.

and, upon the recommendation of a committee, the local's plan of equal distribution of work was adopted and referred to the conference committee for action."¹¹

The grave charges against the accused men belongs to the larger history of the International but it is sufficient to say that the chief accuser was a degenerate of the underworld and the men were finally acquitted. Local 10 promptly adopted resolutions pledging confidence in the accused men. The eight held for murder were released on bail in August and the trial began in September. A motion to dismiss the indictment for murder against Wolf and Metz was granted while Sigman, Stupniker, Wedinger, Singer and Ashpis were acquitted by a jury in September.

The trial aroused the Jewish working masses who had rich memories of the workers' struggle in Russia and the martyrs of that struggle. The men and women who gave their lives for freedom, who faced the Czar's courts, risked imprisonment or exile to Siberia, were sacred to the Jewish workers in the needle trades. Sigman and his associates were regarded in the same light. His calm demeanor at the trial, his readiness to face the electric chair for his class, moved the hearts of the workers and added a new idealist motive to union activities. The

¹¹*The Ladies' Garment Cutter*, December 4, 1915.

trial was the greatest tragedy that had come to the Jewish workers in America. Morris Hillquit's masterly analysis and impassioned plea before the court, his unfoldment of the human aspects of the struggle in the needle trades, is remembered as a great masterpiece of oratory among the Jewish workers and to be ranked with the greatest pleas made for revolutionaries in the old world. His speech was compared with the speeches of Korabchevsky who had defended the famous social-revolutionary, Gershuni and Mendel Beiliss, the Jewish martyr. Abraham Cahan, editor-in-chief of the Jewish *Daily Forward*, reported the trial for his paper, vividly painting the scene as it unfolded from day to day. Since that tragic episode ties of mutual esteem have bound Cahan and Sigman in close friendship. The trial also infused the Locals of the International with flaming enthusiasm for the ideals of their fighting organization.

Early in 1915 Local 10 revised its constitution. Nine years had passed since the cutters had united in one local and the new trade agreement and new constitution showed some interesting changes. The minimum wage, \$25 a week, remained the same as well as the 50-hour week. Overtime continued to be paid at the rate of double time but in 1915 some equitable control over division of overtime had been obtained by restricting it to

the first five days in the week and for not more than two and one-half hours each day. Moreover, overtime was not permitted unless the cutting department was running to capacity. The number of legal holidays, ten, remained the same. Terms of apprentices and their wages remained the same but the employer now had to make application to the local for apprentices instead of the latter applying to the Executive Board. The six months probation period of persons who had been accepted as members was modified by giving the Executive Board some discretion in enforcing the rule. The proposition fee was now \$15 instead of \$25 as in 1906, in compliance with a decision of the International, but an examination fee of \$10 was charged all applicants. The provisions regarding death benefits remained the same, except for some minor changes in their wording. A new article provided for the sub-division of the members in three sections. Dues had increased from 15 to 16 cents a week.

In general the period shows a large increase in membership, expansion of activities, a broader outlook and many new problems. Narrow, even parochial views, still survived and a few years later brought the most shameful episode in the history of Local 10 which is considered in a later chapter. Cutters were entering the trade in large numbers and there were those

who sincerely believed that if they were kept out of the union they would get out of the industry. The editor of the weekly organ gave some attention to this question, insisting that it was the duty of the local to organize all the cutters as those outside the union were "a constant, demoralizing factor, working holidays, long hours, and for all kinds of wages. . . . Once they have spent a couple of years in learning the trade, it is an injustice, besides impossible, to drive them out." To avoid flooding the industry with cutters he urged the need of careful enforcement of apprentice rules and organizing all qualified cutters.¹²

By the end of the year 1914, Local 10 was co-operating with the International and a number of other locals in conjunction with the Rand School of Social Science which gave courses to members in Theoretical and Practical Trade Unionism. The lectures were delivered by Meyer London, Morris Hillquit, Jacob Panken, I. M. Rubinow, Algernon Lee, Wm. Feigenbaum August Classens, Louis Waldman and others. The local actively supported the *New York Daily Call* and *The Ladies' Garment Cutter* frequently urged the members to support the one English daily in New York that was committed to the struggles of organized workers and which had even obtained the support of the Central Feder-

¹²*The Ladies' Garment Cutter*, Nov. 21, 1914.

ated Union. Local 10 began to respond to many causes and appeals outside its own membership, adopting resolutions, appointing committees or electing delegates, appropriating funds, according to the need or the request of each cause. Not that the local in previous years failed to respond to such appeals, It did occasionally, but from the year 1915 Local 10, in relation to such appeals, causes and movements, became increasingly generous, more conscious of the wider implications of the struggles of the working class for a better and nobler civilization.*

*Local 10 also provides relief for its needy members when the need for aid is brought before the Executive Board. The funds for this purpose are obtained from the income realized from annual balls.

EXECUTIVE BOARD, 1915



Standing, left to right: Alex Bloch, Alex Weiss, Elmer Rosenberg, Editor; Sidney Beaver, John W. Settle, Herman Grossman.
Seated, left to right: Charles W. Serrington, John C. Ryan, President; Isadore Epstein, Chairman; Jesse P. Cohen, Manager; Abe Leiberman.

CHAPTER X

THE WELFARE LEAGUE, 1914-1921

One of the problems that confronts the trade unions as well as human society is how to adjust them to industrial changes. What has been called the "cultural lag" prevails in the unions as it does in society. That is, the tendency of masses of men to cling to archaic forms, customs, traditions, policies and prejudices in a changing world. Views formed in a former period that had their justification tend to become fixed. Meantime the industry changes, bringing new problems, requiring new policies and structural changes in the union, while the mental outlook of the elders is rooted in an earlier period. When this occurs a division is certain to appear in the union, bringing with it more or less friction and misunderstanding. Then there is a contest for ideals, the new against the old. If the new ideals are in accord with changes that have taken place in the industry, if they are more adapted to meeting new problems and these ideals triumph, progress is the result. If old policies become fixed in tradition and precedent, progress is halted.

We have seen in previous chapters how the cutters were affected by the clash of old and new ideals, how the conflict brought divisions, quarrels with the International, the expulsion of Local 10 and its reunion with the International. In the period we are now considering it was a conflict between old veterans and new recruits, involving racial, political and, to some extent, religious factors. In the background was the expansion of the industry, bringing with it new problems, some of them menacing in their character. The large shops were largely owned by Germans, but these firms were diminishing in size and number while sub-contractors were increasing. Jewish merchants were becoming a dominant factor in the industry and their feverish competition tended to undermine the large German firms, to multiply the small shops and aggravate the evil of sub-manufacturing. With the spawning of the small shops the drift was toward the sweatshop.

This tendency of the industry to divide into numerous smaller units became pronounced when equal division of work, the right of the boss to fire for any reason that pleased him, and the right of the cutter to his job were becoming important questions in the union. Due to their long acquaintance with foremen cutters, who were conceded freedom of hiring and firing by the "old timers," the latter generally received

preference in the matter of steady employment and extra work while the immigrant cutters received this consideration only in the busiest season. The administration conceded the right to hire and fire as a function that belonged exclusively to the bosses and no effort was made to check this power and prevent its abuse. The new element believed that the union should protect its members from unjust discharges and that there should be an equitable division of work among all cutters whether "old" or "new." Quite a proportion of the immigrant cutters were unable to express their views in English. When they spoke in Yiddish, as Louis Lipschitz did, they were often denied the privilege or were obstructed when they persisted. The language barrier thus raised against them assumed a two-fold aspect. It appeared that the "old timers" were not only opposed to any change but that reasonable discussion of union issues in a language which the immigrants could understand was denied. This may not have been the intention but the immigrant accepted it as such and thus a racial phase accompanied the difference of opinion regarding an effective and equitable union policy. In the '90's the United Cloak and Suit Cutters had provided for the members who understood little English by electing two Vice-Presidents, one who understood both German and English so that the German members would

be on an equal footing with the English-speaking members so far as language was concerned through an official interpreter.

Having on many occasions failed to obtain any changes the new element organized to improve the conditions of the cutters and the administration in turn attempted a counter-organization which failed. A belief that favoritism in distributing jobs in the industry had caused dissention among administration supporters and, thus divided, the "old timers" could not organize effectively. The new element offered a program for the complaints of the cutters and combined with the neglect or inattention given complaints by the administration, increasing dissatisfaction in its ranks and inability of "old timers" to unite, all contributed to the success of the new element.

Still another factor was assuming increasing importance in this period of change. The younger element were mostly Socialists and radicals, many of whom had fled from Russia. Czarist reaction in 1907-1908 was firmly in the saddle, Jews were furnishing many victims to the "Black Hundreds" who were encouraged by the Russian ruling classes, and the outlook for any social and political changes in Russia appeared hopeless. These Jewish workers brought with them a Socialist and radical view of trade unionism that came into conflict with the tra-

ditional views of American trade unionism. In Russia distinctions between the workers of various types were not recognized in the labor and revolutionary movement. The medieval autocracy had hammered the Russian masses of the urban centers into a common solidarity. Their common sufferings and privations bound Jewish, Polish, Russian and other workers of other nationalities into a compact mass inspired by one hope, the freedom of all workers from a common oppression. Their psychology was in marked contrast with American trade unionists who for decades had been quarreling over trade privileges and whose annual gatherings in conventions of the American Federation of Labor were scenes of disputes between national unions for jurisdiction over some particular group of workers in some particular industry. This separatist tendency and trade jealousy of the American workers were unknown to the experience of the immigrants from Russia. So pronounced was the contrast between the old and the new elements that the earlier immigrants found it almost impossible to work with the American trade unionists and they were responsible for some attempts at dual organizations in the earlier period. These organizations were mainly locals of the I. W. W. that contributed confusion and weakness to unionism in the garment industry and, naturally, widened the breach

between the Americans and the immigrants. The old cutters resented the dual organizations of tailors and were justified in this resentment, while time and experience taught the immigrants that their place was in the old unions, not outside fighting them.

However, sentiment among the immigrants was changing. Despite its differences with certain international unions, the United Hebrew Trades vigorously opposed organization of opposition unions and urged affiliation with the American Federation of Labor. The Jewish *Daily Forward* also supported this policy and had great influence in promoting an understanding of the American Federation of Labor among the Jewish workers. The *Daily Forward* itself had been founded as the result of a revolt against the Socialist Labor Party which had organized and promoted the Socialist Trades and Labor Alliance to fight the A. F. of L. unions. Abraham Cahan in the *Daily Forward* and Meyer London speaking with great force at mass meetings brought the more rational view of the trade unions to the immigrants. Both advised the immigrants to make America their home, to understand the history of the trade unions, to take part in their struggles and to fraternize with their members as it was the duty of Socialists to help the unions to become more powerful and progressive.

As the Socialist and radical element increased in numbers the old members of the unions were brought into intimate contact with the new and young element. Some of the prejudices on both sides wore down, especially as they went into strikes and sacrificed for common purposes, but the fundamental views of unionism held by the two groups remained the same. There was also the difference of political views. Many of the veterans and active leaders of the older group were also active workers for Tammany. While the issue of Socialism or radicalism vs. Tammany was not declared in the union, nevertheless it was in the minds of both elements while each was striving to have the union administered in accord with its view of what constituted an effective unionism.

The old cutters had largely determined policies and administered the affairs of the union for many years till December, 1913, when there was a change which forecast a new regime. Both groups knew that for the first time the election of officers would be a close one and every effort was made by both sides to get its respective supporters to vote. The result was the polling of the largest vote ever cast by members of Local 10 up to this election. There were a total of 1,201 ballots cast, the main contest being between John C. Ryan and Elmer Rosenberg for President. Ryan received 425 votes and Rosen-

berg 742. The younger element had won its first victory in the election of Rosenberg, who also became editor of *The Ladies' Garment Cutter*. In the first editorial he wrote the new Editor sounded a fighting note, not against the "old timers" but, for all the members, saying: "Workers of all countries, unite, you have nothing to lose but slack seasons, strikes, boycotts, lockouts, injunctions, policemen's clubs, dirty, unsanitary shops and worse living houses, adulterated food, poor clothes, poor health and a pauper's grave, you have happiness to gain."¹

This success of the new element suggested the idea of the formation of its most active members in an organized group to advance the ideas and policies for which it stood. In fact, Rosenberg's success was largely due to the organization of a Committee of Fifty which actively worked for his election. This success gave the radicals encouragement to proceed with further organization and shortly after the election they organized the "Good and Welfare League." While political ideals inspired many members of the League it was the new problems brought by a changing industry and a different approach to these problems that induced the radicals to organize their group. The old time cutter continued to regard the immigrant cutter as an unwelcome invader whose presence was a danger.

¹*The Ladies' Garment Cutter*, January 10, 1914.

He was "undermining conditions" and was working below the scale. He did not understand that the immigrant cutter was a phase of the expansion and change of the industry, a man to be organized, not to be driven out of the industry. The fact that he was coming in was proof that he could not be pushed out. If he remained in the industry and was kept out of the union or not encouraged to join it, he and his kind would constitute a scattered group of workers to be used by the employers for their own benefit during strikes. Unorganized cutters would owe no obligation to union members on strike if their union recognized no obligation to take in all cutters who desired to join.

The program of the Welfare League was to improve conditions for the cutters and check the tendency to a return to sweatshop conditions by providing for equal division of work, no discharge of workers without just cause, and other reforms. The "old timers" were mainly employed in the large shops while the immigrants were forced into the small sweat shops, the shops of the contractors and sub-manufacturers where conditions were not so good as in the large shops. In the less desirable shops a cutter was needed only at the height of the season. When orders declined the cutter was laid off and the boss would cut until another rush season forced him to hire a cutter. The new ele-

ment was, therefore, forced to shift for itself, uncertain of employment and buffeted about by the impersonal forces of the market.

Then in a period of brisk expansion of the industry extra cutters were in demand. If the supply of "old timers" was used up and more cutters were needed the immigrant cutter filled the gap, but when the slack season came he was the first to be discharged. Hence arose the demand of the new element that the employers should hire cutters to do their cutting all the time. To meet the problem of the immigrant who filled vacancies after the "old timers" were placed, only to be the first discharged when industry slowed down, there arose the demand for equal division of work. These problems were important and involved an issue of equity between "old timers" and "new comers" as well.

Shops were also filling up with "learners" who were entitled to protection against the menace of sweatshop exploitation. The radical element of cutters who were joining Local 10, and others who had been members for years and who spoke English fluently, believed that their experience and numbers justified them in acquiring a larger share in the policies of the local. If the "old timers" believed that the "new comers" were "greenhorns," the "new comers" believed that the "old timers" were "old fogies." The Welfare League was the outcome of the

new and old psychologies while a changing industry brought to an acute stage some issues which had been developing for years.

When Local 10 returned to the International in February, 1910, the waist and dress cutters of Local 30 were taken in, but only one of the many business agents was assigned to the waist and dress shops and he was a cloak man. The cloak and suit cutters were mainly "old timers" while the waist and dress cutters were "new comers" and in assigning a cloak man as business agent the "new comers" believed that cutters in the waist and dress industry were not receiving the union service which their problems required. Another grievance was the shifting of young cutters in the cloak shops to the waist and dress industry when they applied for membership in Local 10. This appeared to the "new comers" as a policy of keeping the cloak trade for the "old timers" and making the waist and dress trade a dumping ground for the young men. Moreover, one business agent could not handle all the shops, many skilled waist and dress cutters were being discharged and were replaced by those next in line for promotion, and unmerited discharges by the bosses were not being challenged.

The waist and dress strike of 1913 was followed by the Protocol which accepted the principles and obligations of the preferential union

shop as "defined and understood in the cloak industry," prohibited inside sub-manufacturing and granted a 50-hour week providing that "the other branches in the women's wear industry then under union agreement shall also have agreed to a standard of 49 hours per week" when the hours per week should also be 49. Full-fledged cutters received not less than \$25 a week while apprentices were divided into three grades as follows: Grade A, those less than one year's standing. Grade B, those more than one years' and less than two years' standing. Grade C, those of more than two years' and less than three years' standing. Their wages were, Grade A, \$6 per week; Grade B, \$12 per week; Grade C, \$18 per week. On or about the 15th days of June and November of each year Local 10 was to hold examinations for the admission of apprentices of Grade C to the class of full-fledged cutters. After January 1, 1914, not more than one apprentice to each shop employing five cutters was permitted "but in case there shall be less than five cutters employed, one apprentice may be employed." Double pay for overtime was conceded.²

By the end of 1915 there was general dissatisfaction with the Protocol and in February, 1916, it was revised. A general strike was called to effect a general organization of the trade which

²Protocol in *The Ladies' Garment Cutter*, February 21, 1914.

lasted less than a week in the shops of the association manufacturers and about two weeks in the independent shops. The revised Protocol provided wage increases and defined four grades of apprentices. Full-fledged cutters who, prior to January 29, 1917, received a minimum of \$27.50 were to receive a minimum of \$29. Full-fledged cutters who had received a minimum of \$25 were to receive \$27.50 "for the balance of the first year from their examination or recognition as full-fledged cutters and thereafter a minimum of \$29 per week." Any such cutter who was required to do pattern grading "shall at once receive a minimum of \$29 per week." Wages of apprentices were fixed as follows: Those in Grade A, of less than one year's standing, \$7; Grade B, those of more than one year, but less than two years' standing, \$13.25; Grade C, those of more than two years, but less than three years' standing, \$20; Grade D, those of more than three years' standing, but not yet passed or recognized as full-fledged cutters, \$23.

The revised Protocol also provided for an Examination Board consisting of three representatives of each organization to "have power to advance cutters' apprentices to the rank of full-fledged cutters, after an apprenticeship of at least three years and a proper examination as to other qualifications." Apprentices were to be employed "in the proportion of one to five

full-fledged cutters or part of five full-fledged cutters." To this was added that "Where, on the first of February, 1916, or shortly thereafter, the proportion was greater, the apprentices then employed may be continued, and if any such apprentice shall during such season for any reason cease to be employed, he may be replaced by an apprentice of the same grade and of no lower wage for such season. Application for any deviation from the rule or for the continuance in employment of such replacing apprentice after such season, may be made to the Chief Clerks, who shall have power to decide. Any other deviation from the above rule shall not be permitted except on consent of the Chief Clerks of both parties."

Another section of the Protocol provided that distribution of work in slack seasons should be made "as nearly equal as possible among those competent to do the work. This provision shall also apply to full-fledged cutters, but as to cutters in grades A, B, C and D, it shall be optional with the employer to include them or not to include them within its operation."³ This left an opening for favoritism on the part of the employers

³*Protocol of Peace, 1916, pp. 4, 5 and 12.* John C. Ryan, a member of the Examination Committee, declares that unskilled cutters were taken in 1910 and for a number of years and bosses refused to pay the scale on the ground that they were not qualified. He and John May helped apprentices to pass from one grade to another.

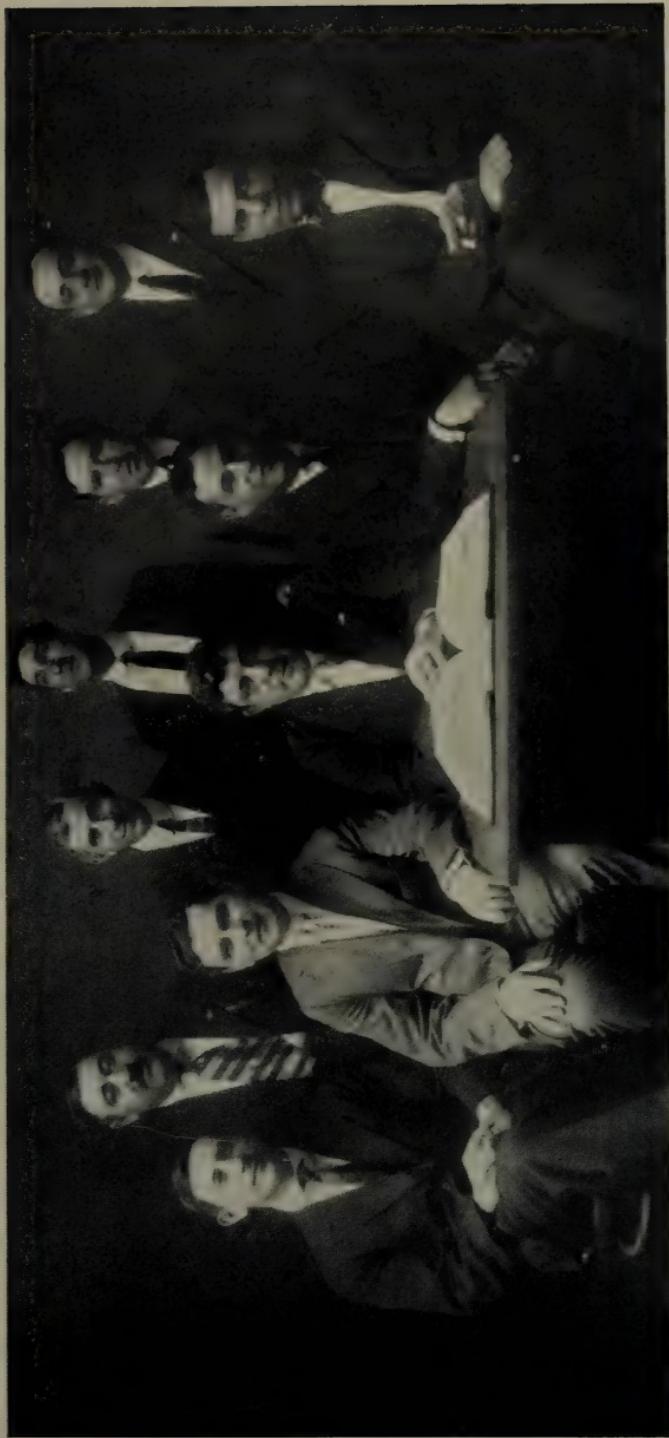
while many apprentices did not report for examination as to their fitness to work as full-fledged cutters. They reasoned that steady work was more likely as an apprentice than as a skilled cutter. To meet this situation the union decided not to urge division of work for apprentices which in turn induced them to take the examinations. The problem was a grave one, for instead of the ratio of apprentices to cutters being one to five it rose as high as ten apprentices to one cutter. The cloak section was not troubled with the apprentice problem because young men of that section were shifted into the waist and dress shops. This provided an issue of equity in the treatment of cutters in two branches of the industry which ranged "new comers" against "old timers." Eventually the union obtained control of apprentices and together with the decline of the waist industry the need of sub-division of the local disappeared and a consolidation was effected under one manager in January, 1922. With this background of new factors, forces and tendencies it is not surprising that new issues developed in the union and that a group of members formulated them into a program.

The membership of the Welfare League was confined to members of Local 10. At times it had as many as eighty members but it had no re-

lations with any outside organization. It received no outside guidance, support or funds. Its officers consisted of a chairman, a treasurer, and a secretary. In time of elections committees were selected to promote the election of favored candidates nominated in meetings of the local. Matters to be acted upon by the local were sometimes discussed in league meetings but no matters were considered in the league except those related to local affairs and problems of the cutters. Funds for the league's work were obtained from contributions of cutters. The active spirits were chiefly the active members of the new element who in the local were agitating for new union policies.

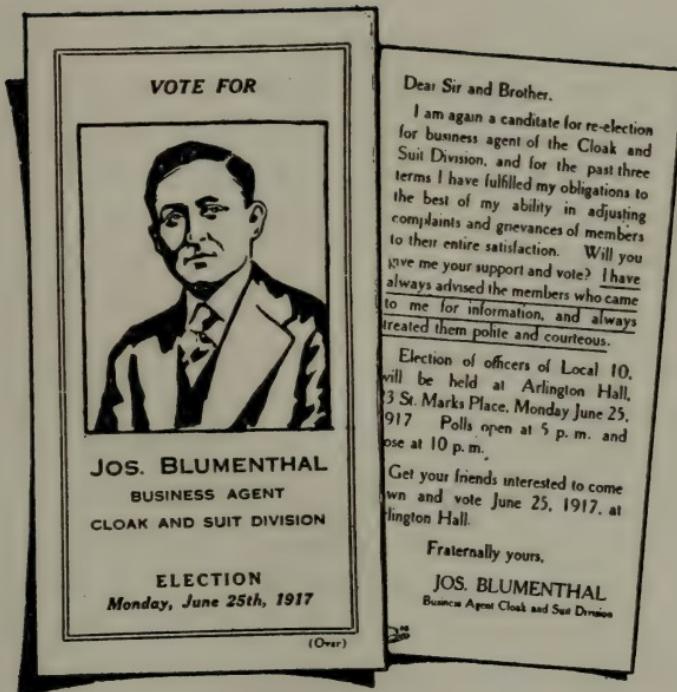
Oral persuasion was supplemented by the distribution of literature of an educational character which discussed problems of the cutters and issues in the local and urged the election of candidates who would support these issues. This literature was something new in the Yiddish labor movement. Some American unions had taken this course in presenting union issues but more often candidates had simply printed cards and this had often been done in Local 10. The distribution of cards implied a personal appeal for support; the appearance of literature meant the presentation of problems and issues while the individual became a factor in elections ac-

STAFF OF OFFICERS, 1915



Standing, Left to Right: Max Stern, Harry Goldstein, Isidore Epstein, Julius Bender, Edward Fine.
Seated, Left to Right: Henry Singer, Max Gorenstein, Jesse P. Cohen, Manager; Charles Beaver, Nat Baron.



**OLD TIME METHOD OF CAMPAIGNING**

cording to his attitude toward these problems and issues.*

When the Welfare League finally became a power it not only found itself opposed to those representing the old policies but new groups as well. New leagues appeared. To Foster's Trade Union Educational League the Welfare League was not radical enough and to the "old timers" it was too radical. A new Dress League also appeared which desired more influence and power for the dress cutters. The league of the Communists presented a peculiar contradiction. After the period of consolidation they urged a policy of separatism for the dress cutters under a separate manager while the Welfare League opposed this policy as retrograde.

Many trade unions have been the scene of these group organizations and rivalries growing out of differing views. In the Typographical Union and other unions these groups have appeared for many years in the larger cities, sometimes linked together for the support of national officials or the election of others. When confined to the union itself, permitting no outside influence to be involved, confining their activities to the problems of the union and the industry, avoiding bitter epithets and personal feuds,

*This outline of the Welfare League is based on data provided by members of the league and checked by documents issued by the league as well as other material.

and presenting their claims and issues in an intelligent and dignified manner, these groups are not necessarily harmful. If kept within these bounds they bring differences under organized and disciplined control, the best men are chosen to present the most effective arguments for a given policy, the erratic member whose utterances tend to breed anger instead of clarifying issues is kept in check, and issues are decided with a maximum of information and a minimum of factional feeling. This open and intelligent organization and presentation of issues is better for all concerned than secret organization which always breeds suspicion. Whether a group has justified its existence depends upon whether it has carried on its work in the intelligent and dignified way mentioned above and whether its program has strengthened the union.

Some Socialists feared that the Welfare League would bring mischief and Meyer London criticised it severely. His attitude toward the cloakmakers' Locals was that of a father who grieved over any dissents that might be brought into the family. The appearance of any special groups in the unions annoyed him and the Jewish *Daily Forward* gave no encouragement to the Welfare League. When a committee of Local 10 applied to the *Forward* for publicity for the Welfare League Harry Lang, its labor editor, made it clear that the *Forward*, al-

though a Socialist organ, could not interfere in the affairs of a union. Believing that the *Forward* policy regarding trade unionism was due to Meyer London's influence, the Jewish Socialist Federation placed the matter before Editor Cahan. He decided that Lang's interpretation of the *Forward's* policy was correct. A compromise was finally reached by which notices sent in by the Welfare League should be printed but that no League propaganda would be accepted. This policy was pursued not because Cahan, London or Lang believed in the old policies of Local 10 but because they feared the harmful effects of group organization by the new element.*

Whether the Welfare League in its activities complied with the ethics of group organization may be a matter of opinion by various members of Local 10, but the objective historian, consulting the literature of the Welfare League and the discussion of issues it raised in the official weekly of the local, can reach only one conclusion. The League on the whole presented its issues on a higher plane than they have been presented by groups in some organizations like the Typographical Union. Most of its literature, of course, appeared just preceding each election

*I am indebted to Mr. Harry Lang for this account of the attitude of the *Forward*, Meyer London, Abraham Cahan, the Jewish Socialist Federation and himself.

of officials. The pre-election literature consisted of a four-page leaflet and was supplemented with some small cards announcing a meeting of the League and inviting all members to attend, or cards carrying the names of the candidates it favored and a presentation of their union record, program and personal qualifications for the office for which they were nominated. Practically all the active spirits were Socialists, but they acted as unionists and were not guided, influenced or directed by any outside organization of Socialists. No vituperation or slander was directed against opponents and even criticism of opponents was rare in this literature. The strongest language the author has found in these broadsides is one statement that an anti-League candidate for Vice-President "is a negligible quantity." The emphasis is always placed upon the record and qualifications of its own candidates, not in criticism or questioning the intentions of opponents.

An example of all these broadsides is the leaflet issued prior to the election of December, 1922, and it is selected not because it differs from earlier broadsides but because it happens to bear a year date and the others do not. Two pages are devoted to a review of the purposes of the League and what it had accomplished. In modest language it claimed to have accomplished "the unification of the three divi-

sions under the supervision of one management;" that as a result of its activities there was a "splendid attendance" of members at meetings of the local that cutters were never better satisfied over the way their affairs were handled; that the spirit of the local had revived; that "its achievements are of far greater benefit to the organization than the preachings of sub-divisions and branch separatism," and that the League would continue its work "for unity, efficiency and economy in spite of all obstacles put in its way." The third page presents the qualifications of the League candidates and the last page a complete list of these candidates, concluding with an announcement of the time and place of the local election. The reference to "sub-divisions and branch separatism" applied to a Dress League whose leaflets urged such divisions and a separate manager. A Progressive League, representing Communist sentiment, supported the Dress League on this issue of separatism in the hope of winning support of the Dress League despite the fact that Communists were pledged to the principle of amalgamation. The Dress League consisted of dress cutters who "bolted" from the Welfare League in 1921 and organized under the leadership of Harry Berlin and Charles Stein. One Dress League candidate for business agent, Adolph Sonen, had served several terms as business agent. After a limited campaign, David

Fruhling, Welfare League candidate, defeated Sonen by 12 votes.*

Naturally, there were conflicts of opinion in local meetings between the two groups and these occasionally became heated, but the records of the local show that before any group organizations had appeared Local 10 had been the scene of such clashes. The organization of the League was in time followed by counter-organization of the "old timers" and those who accepted their general views. The rival group assumed the name of the "Loyalty League" which also brought its opinions under intelligent organization and discipline. Moreover, when the local was involved in a strike the two groups worked in harmony for claims and issues involving all cutters except for a small faction of the "old time" cutters and a few conservatives in 1919 whose amazing actions are the subject of a later chapter.

Within a few months after the election of Rosenberg as President the opposing views of the two groups were the subject of frequent de-

*In 1920 Louis Lipschitz, a business agent for several terms and an active Welfare League member, also defied the league when it endorsed Samuel Perlmutter for Manager of the cloak division. He ran in opposition to Perlmutter and the latter defeated him by three votes. Julius Samuels united with Lipschitz in this defiance although both had previously been successful as league candidates. Samuels accepted for Financial Secretary-Treasurer against Joseph Fish, the league candidate, but Fish was successful by about 20 votes.

bates and in April the editor of the local weekly gave some attention to it. He observed that "One of the oldest tactics on the part of the enemy of the working class is to divide the workers into hostile factions and make them fight one another. They exploit race, creed and color differences." He recognized a conflict in the local between "old timers" and "new comers" and asked, "Should we interpret this as a line of cleavage between the original four or five hundred members in 1909 as against the five thousand five hundred members that joined in 1910 and since?" He contended that all cutters belonged to the same class with common interests and urged old and new cutters "to give people who intend to separate instead of unite a wide berth."⁵ However, this was ignoring the backgrounds and origins of differences that were inevitable.

In the following month a spokesman of the "old timers" contended that "the bone and sinew of our organization lies in the 1,200 odd members who have fought, sacrificed, and suffered before the strike of 1910." This also ignored the historical causes that account for the conflicting views and it is doubtful whether any member would deny the contributions made by the veterans to the building of a union of cutters. The writer rejoiced that the "old timers" always re-

⁵*The Ladies' Garment Cutter*, April 18, 1914.

sponded to a strike call with all other members but deplored their "unseemly" inactivity in the local which he attributed to the rise of the radical new element and contended that radical unions are always weak and conservative unions always strong. To this the editor answered "with all due consideration to the old timers for past performances," that besides the 1,200 "there were 9,200 young timers" who had also fought and sacrificed and then added the most significant observation of the discussion by saying that "it is but natural that the old will be supplanted by the new. It is true of ethics, morals, religions, politics and labor union tactics." The editor could have added that it is also human and natural for the old to resist being supplanted by the new.^e

The conflict, however, was not entirely one of old and new members as there were old members who were members of the Welfare League and some young members who opposed the League. On this score Editor Rosenberg made a telling point in the following October. Objection had been made that the new element controlled the Executive Board and that the head of the local was a member for only four years. Ignoring himself, he presented the following figures of membership of each member of the Executive Board: Fred. Lerocker, member of

^e*Ibid.*, May 30, 1914.

various unions for 36 years, including the Knights of Labor; Sol Levine, 30 years; Morris Abrams, 22 years; Nathan Ross, 12 years; Sidney Beaver, 13 years; Alex. Weiss, 6 years; Hyman Orlean, 4 years; Edward Fine, 11 years.⁷ This showed that in the previous election the members had equitably apportioned membership in the board according to service in the labor movement, a substantial majority being members with long service to their credit. Yet it would be misleading to conclude that age of service had determined the election of these members although the new element did take long and honorable service into consideration. For example, John C. Ryan, who was defeated for President of Local 10, was later recognized by the Welfare League members which on several occasions helped to elect him as delegate to conventions. Julius Bender was not opposed by the Welfare League and through the efforts of the new element he was placed in the Unemployment Insurance Fund Office. While there was a division between "old timers" and "new comers" this did not prevent a young member of conservative tendencies from accepting the leadership of the old group or an old member with radical beliefs from joining the Welfare League.

The new element advanced from one local

⁷*The Ladies' Garment Cutter*, October 24, 1914.

election to another, obtaining control and enacting changes in the constitution which was supplemented by recommendations of the Executive Board and decisions of the local. Neither group was permitted to use *The Ladies' Garment Cutter* for electioneering purposes and all members had access to its columns. Not till June, 1917, did the "new comers" fill most of the responsible offices. Jesse P. Cohen, an "old timer," filled the important position of Business Manager from 1910 till 1913 and from 1914 to 1917, when he was defeated by a small vote by Harry Goldstein* for manager of the Cloak and Suit Section. The names of "old timers" like John C. Ryan and Alexander Bloch also appear in this transition period as President, Ryan for several terms and then being defeated by the "old timer," Bloch, in December, 1915. In the following year there was another contest for this office between two "old timers," Ryan and Sam-

*A "split" had occurred in the ranks of the "old timers." Martin headed one group and Cohen the other. The Welfare League took advantage of the situation and supported Goldstein, an "old timer." He received part of the "old timers" vote plus the radical vote and defeated Cohen, who was considered the strongest man in the local at that time. In the same year (1917) Perlmutter requested space in *The Ladies' Garment Cutter* to announce a debate between Max Margulies, a spirited league member, and Cohen on trade problems, but chiefly on equal division of work which was denounced by its opponents as "equal destruction of work." The Executive Board denied the request. Harry Berlin, a board member, declared that Local 10 was not a riff-raff organization and that no consideration could be given any outside groups.

uel Martin, the latter defeating his opponent. In 1917 Rosenberg was elected First Vice-President at the Philadelphia convention of the International. As his duties would frequently require his absence from the city he resigned as Editor of *The Ladies' Garment Cutter*. President Martin then appointed Sam B. Shenker to succeed Rosenberg. Shenker belonged to the new element but had not been conspicuous in the group rivalries. Moreover, the "old timers" lacked material for a competent editor. The new editor followed the policy of his predecessor in supporting the reforms urged by the Welfare League and continued the general progressive policy which Rosenberg had maintained.

In this period of contest between the two groups the local elections proceeded without interruption with one exception, the one in June, 1916. The Election Board was to have reported the results on July 1 but the local meeting was postponed because the report was not ready. The matter drifted into August when President Bloch announced his resignation to become an employer. The local met on August 21 and receiving no report from the Election Board the members decided to hold another election on September 2. The official weekly of the local does not disclose the reason why so important a committee as the Election Board never made any returns of the June election. As for the

members who met on August 21 they "hardly discussed" the neglect of the board.⁸ It is known however, that the ballot boxes were held in a room in the Bronx and nothing was to be gained by giving publicity to the incident.

No menacing factional hatreds endangering the existence of Local 10 or even hampering its regular work resulted from either the organization of the Welfare League or the Loyalty League. The radical cutters succeeded in contributing much to the shorter work week, equal division of work, enforcing penalties where agreements were violated, and improved the efficiency of administrative routine. The Welfare League might have continued as a group organization were it not for the injection of an exotic influence in Locals of the International and other organizations in the needle trades. This was an attempt to bring the Labor and Socialist movement of the United States under the control and direction of the Trade Union Educational League founded by William Z. Foster. It had its origin outside the locals and bore no relation whatever to the changing problems of the ladies' garment industry. A consideration of this phase of the history of Local 10 belongs to a later chapter but by the middle of the year 1923 Communist activities had begun to threaten

⁸*The Ladies' Garment Cutter*, August 26, 1916.

demoralization of the International and make it helpless before the employing class.

Facing this situation, the General Executive Board of the International gave serious attention to it and on August 16 it sent a statement to all Locals and Joint Boards. Communist groups had been organized in various Locals under a variety of names which we shall consider later and in its statement to the membership the General Executive Board ordered all group organizations of whatever kind to disband. "The individuals or groups," declared the board, "who attempt to determine the policies of our organization in caucus and outside of the regular meetings of the organization; who seek to force their decisions upon the membership at large; who attack and villify the chosen representatives of the organization and systematically obstruct all activities of the organization, are undermining the very foundations of the Union, and are its enemies." The board warned that "All members of local unions who persist in the objectionable activities described above shall be brought to trial on the charge of conduct detrimental to the organization in the manner provided by our constitution."¹⁹

Local 10 met on August 27 and among other matters considered this decision of the board. The members of the Welfare League abandoned

¹⁹*Justice*, August 24, 1923.

their group organization as good union members. A few Communists two days before the local meeting had met as a "Provisional Committee, Cutters Union, Local 10," and had decided to oppose the order of the board. They objected to the order in the local meeting of August 27, were told that it could be reversed only by a convention, and this ruling stood despite points of order and an attempt to obstruct or delay action.¹⁰

Considering the factors related to the rise of the new element in Local 10, especially the invasion of the industry by the immigrant cutters, the "new comers" would in time have become the leading group if no Welfare League had been organized. All that the League did was to advance the day when the "old timers" ceased to be the dominant group in the local. If no group organization had appeared it is probable that the inevitable change would have been delayed a year, or two years, at the most. That no bitter and lasting feuds have survived the change is to the credit of all the cutters. Differences of opinion remained, it is true, but they did not break into personal animosities or intense factional wars. Local 10 had become a stable and disciplined organization even before the new element had become the dominant one and

¹⁰*Justice*, August 31, 1923.

the decline of the old and the rise of the new group did not disturb this stability. In popular lingo, Local 10 "had arrived."

CHAPTER XI

POLITICS

Since the year 1880 there has been an almost continuous decline in the number of qualified voters exercising the suffrage in the United States and in recent years the average is about 50 per cent. The fact that one-half the voters of the nation take no interest in elections has given some people much concern. The first trade unions in the United States fought for general manhood suffrage. Neither the American Revolution nor the Constitution broke down the property qualifications which excluded many workers from the franchise. In fighting for the right to vote the organized workers had one advantage which their brothers in Europe did not have. As new States in the West were admitted to the Union they came in with constitutions granting suffrage to all males without any property requirements. The new States had no settled wealthy classes like the States in the East which accounts for the manhood suffrage sentiment in the West. These more liberal new states attracted the discontented of the East and

the eastern States gradually abandoned their property qualifications for the suffrage in order to avoid a heavy loss of population. In this way the West enormously helped the workers of the East to obtain the suffrage.

As suffrage concessions were being made to the workers in the twenties the labor organizations of the cities organized labor parties. Although the organized workers of this country were the first of any nation to organize such parties, today they do not support one of their own. They have left their political power unorganized and have confined their efforts to distributing it among numerous candidates of various parties and then sending agents to the law-making bodies to ask for favors and to ward off hostile legislation. The cutters have an interesting history in their relation to politics and political action, a brief review of which is essential to round out the story of their evolution as an organization.

The Gotham Knife Cutters were occasionally warned by Grand Master Workman Powderly to avoid politics. This view was always accepted as a wise course and yet Gotham had to occasionally consider questions of a political character. In June, 1884, Powderly sent a circular to the local Assemblies stating that the constitution of the Knights of Labor did not permit the use of the Assemblies or the name of the

organization for political purposes. Each meeting of an Assembly, however, was not considered complete without a lecture or a debate upon some important question. If some outside speaker was not obtained for the evening the members were invited to bring up for discussion some matter under the head of "Labor." Frequently the invited speaker or the members themselves would wander into some phase of politics or political action. What education the members obtained regarding trade unionism and politics was derived from these discussions in the Assemblies for there were few pamphlets and practically no books available that were written from the point of view of the organized workers.

In the month following receipt of the circular mentioned above, P. J. McGuire, Master Workman of District 49, addressed the Gotham "Sanctuary" and the record shows that he delivered a speech that was essentially political. The secretary recorded this summary of the address: "As the Bankers, Doctors, Rum Sellers, Landlords and Politicians had banded themselves together for the purpose of both living on and crushing down the workingmen, it was about time the workmen tried to do something for themselves."

In August of the same year Gotham received a letter from the Central Labor Union on a po-

litical matter and it resolved to notify that body that "hereafter no report could be received that had anything of a political nature therein" but in November the members listened to a representative of the Dry Goods Clerks. The speaker had attended a meeting of manufacturers who were organizing a league to oppose free trade and he urged Gotham to cooperate with the clerks and the manufacturers in supporting a tariff policy and Gotham gave its approval. In December a committee was appointed to cooperate in arrangements for a mass meeting. McGuire who spoke to the Assembly in July was a Socialist and in May, 1888, Charles Soth-ern, another Socialist lectured. In December, 1887, the Assembly received a letter from Powderly urging members to sign a petition in favor of government ownership of the telegraph system. This was approved, the members signed, and a committee was appointed to "wait on the Congressman of our district." But in April, 1888, Gotham notified the Central Labor Union that it "should not take any political action next election." In the following year this action was repeated and throughout this year, 1889, Goth-am confined its political activity to endorsing a factory inspector, listening to discussions for and against the Australian ballot, and sending a resolution to Congress.

In spite of the constitutional prohibition of

politics Gotham could not avoid political questions but it is evident that it was opposed to independent political organization as most of the unions of this period were. Gotham followed what had become the traditional policy of trade unions by adopting resolutions and occasionally favoring the appointment of some person to office as in the case of a factory inspector. This remained the general political attitude of the cutters down to a modern period. The records of Gotham for the three years of 1903-1905 do not reveal a single action of a political character. It gave its attention entirely to trade and union matters. The same thing is true of Local 6 in the same period.

Meantime conventions of the International frequently considered political resolutions. In the early conventions Benjamin Schlesinger carried on an unremitting agitation to win the members from support of the two major parties. In the convention of 1902 he obtained the adoption of a resolution urging Locals "to arrange for bi-monthly or at least monthly lectures and discussions upon all educational subjects" while the Manhattan Knife Cutters introduced a resolution in the same convention declaring that "the time has arrived for the workingmen to organize themselves as a class politically" which was also adopted. A resolution of Abraham Rosenberg was also adopted which provided "for the ex-

clusion from participation in the conventions of the International of all those holding office under either of the two existing capitalistic parties."¹

While this indicated the trend of opinion in the International it did not represent the general opinion of Local 6 or of Gotham. In the convention of 1903 Schlesinger and Philip Davis presented a resolution which urged the members "to study the Socialist movement and resort to the same political power in order that they may, in their battle for human rights, not only strike as a unit, but also vote as a unit, to the end that they may usher in as soon as possible the ideal of the cooperative commonwealth." Schlesinger also introduced a separate resolution congratulating the Socialist Party for its position in support of all trade union struggles.² Both resolutions were adopted without a dissenting vote, but this does not mean unanimous agreement. The delegates of Gotham and Local 6 probably did not consider it worth the time to argue against the resolutions.

In 1904 Schlesinger was President of the International and devoted the final section of his report to a condemnation of the Republican and Democratic parties and recommending that the convention approve the Socialist Party platform

¹*Proceedings*, 1902, pp. 19, 23, 24

²*Proceedings*, 1903, pp. 23, 32.

as the political philosophy of the International. For the first time the minority dissented. A majority of the Committee on Officers' Reports favored adoption of the Socialist platform while the minority favored Socialism but urged that party politics be excluded from conventions and Locals. The record does not show a vote on this division but on the fourth day the convention adopted a resolution favoring "public ownership of all utilities" and recommending "the discussion of Socialism at the conventions of the I. L. G. W. U." Although adopted, this resolution provoked "a prolonged and heated discussion."³

It is unnecessary to follow the evolution of political ideas further in the International but the drift is apparent. The cutters followed the traditional course of American trade unions until the younger element came to exercise a controlling influence in Local 10. In September, 1914, officers of the International and representatives of a number of the Locals, including Local 10, organized to assist in the election of Meyer London as the Socialist candidate for Congress in the 12th Congressional District. London was successful and the delegates of the Joint Board gave him an enthusiastic reception. However, the older element of Local 10 was also favorable to London because of his long and unselfish services in helping to build the Inter-

³*Proceedings, 1904, pp. 13, 14, 16, 23.*

national and the old members could rejoice with the new element in his election.

Of some significance in the political trend of Local 10 was its participation in May Day celebrations with Socialist and educational organizations. In 1914 it joined with 50,000 workers in a street parade and the transparencies carried were significant of the wider outlook of the local. These referred to the massacre of miners in Colorado, the jailing of Sigman, Metz and Stupnicker, unemployment, opposition to war and recalled the death of 147 men and women in the Triangle Waist Company fire. Thousands sang the "Marseillaise," the "International," and the "Hymn of the Workers." This was repeated in 1915 but the war years with their accompanying war hysteria made such demonstrations impossible. Local 10 was also giving support and encouragement to the struggling Socialist and labor daily, the *New York Call*.

In 1914 Benjamin Schlesinger, Socialist idealist, returned to the presidency of the International. He came to the United States in 1890, became President of the International in the years 1903-1904, joined the Socialist Party and was one of the active Socialists that sided with the *Jewish Daily Forward*. With his return to the presidency in 1914 a new era in that organization began. Morris Sigman came in as General Secretary Treasurer but resigned the fol-

lowing year and was succeeded by Abraham Baroff. The International extended its activities on a larger scale and it was understood that a more radical policy would be followed. At the conventions of the International which elected Schlesinger there were big demonstrations for Socialist principles and his administration became increasingly sympathetic with the Socialist movement. Local 10 kept pace with this evolution of the International.

In the famous fight by Professor Hourwich against the "Protocol" under the previous administration of Rosenberg and Dych, Local 10 supported the International and with the election of Schlesinger Local 10 became one of his most influential supporters. This support of Local 10 was also transferred to Sigman who, as stated in another chapter, was induced by Local 10 to become a candidate to succeed Schlesinger when the latter resigned. Sigman is not a party Socialist. In his younger days he was influenced by Syndicalist ideas and while today he considers the industrial struggle of utmost importance he is not opposed to the political struggle. He believes in adapting the political struggles to the circumstances of each country.

Local 10 has never participated in specific Jewish political movements. The Zionist controversy among Jewish workers once involved Local 10 when Harry Berlin was President. He

had connections with the Poale-Zion Party and this organization engaged in activities that appeared to antagonize the work of organized Jewish workers and the latter fought back. The Zionists were charged with sabotaging the campaign of Meyer London for Congress and attacking labor leaders they did not like. Minority groups in the unions were called to Zionist conferences and at one of these Berlin announced that he represented Local 10. He was reprimanded at the next meeting of the local which also issued a statement disassociating it from the conference and the group initiating it.*

In March, 1917, war clouds hovered over the United States and in that month representatives of the trade unions met in Washington at the call of President Gompers and pledged the support of the unions in the event of the United States entering the World War. Almost simultaneously representatives of the Jewish trade unions, the Workmen's Circle, and the Jewish Socialist Federation met in conference and adopted a declaration which, in the perspective of years, now reads like a prophecy. Among other things they declared that our entrance into the war will enable ruling capital "to increase its profits still more, to introduce conscription, to impose the heavy yoke of militarism on the

*These paragraphs regarding Schlesinger, Sigman and the Zionist movement are adapted from material supplied by Mr. Harry Lang.

necks of the people, to check our freedom of organization and of fighting for our rights and to intoxicate the minds of the masses with jingoism."⁴ In the following month President Gompers was opposing a conscription bill in Congress but on May 18 President Wilson signed the Conscription Act and in a proclamation humorously declared that "It is in no sense a conscription of the unwilling." Local 10 endorsed the anti-militarist and pro-peace People's Council in August and in the following month the members by an overwhelming majority declined to support the American Alliance for Labor and Democracy organized by officials of the American Federation of Labor to combat peace agitation and to support government policies in the war. In the meantime the Central Federated Union, previously against war, came over to the support of the A. F. of L. war policy and in April voted to withdraw its endorsement of the *New York Call*. The members of Local 10 met in the same month and voted to send a protest to the C. F. U. against its action.⁵ Before the end of the year the mob spirit, joined with general political reaction, had justified the warnings which Local 10 and other organizations had issued on the eve of our entrance into the war but as the war mania obtained supremacy over all

⁴*The Ladies' Garment Cutter*, March 17, 1917.

⁵*The Ladies' Garment Cutter*, May 5, 1917.

the institutions of the United States little could be done by the progressive trade unions during the war years but wait for history to vindicate their attitude.*

In November, 1917, Elmer Rosenberg was elected with ten other Socialists to the State Assembly. *The Ladies' Garment Cutter* did not take part in the campaign but in the following year the convention of the International gave its endorsement to the Socialist Party as the political organization of the working people. Following this action of the convention the official weekly of Local 10 for the first time, in June, 1918, definitely approved this political policy. The editor declared that the convention's action "means first, that the International is represented in whatever legislative body a Socialist is found. Second, and what is more important, it means unified political action. . . . Of course, the endorsement of the Socialist Party by no means chokes the right of the minority, nor do we mean to imply that whoever supported the Republican or Democratic party in the past was a traitor to the International Union."* In September the Executive Board of Local 10 received a request from the Joint Board to cooperate with it in a campaign to re-elect

*During the war Local 10 purchased Liberty Bonds to the amount of a thousand dollars.

**Ibid.*, June 8, 1918.

Meyer London and this was done with the approval of the membership. Meantime the Socialist Party had adopted a Reconstruction Program which had evoked considerable comment, such publications as *The New Republic*, *The Nation*, *The Dial* and *The Liberator*, recommending it as worthy of serious consideration. The editor of the local's weekly in a long editorial also recognized it "as the most comprehensive document put forth by any American political party during the present crisis in this country."¹ Max Margulies, a member of Local 10, had been nominated by the Socialists for Senator in the 12th Senatorial District and Rosenberg had been renominated. A membership meeting of Local 10 approved their candidacies and also endorsed Meyer London. This induced Editor Shenker to say that "The cutters have already begun to think along independent lines. They have not only endorsed candidates who are members of the only working class party—the Socialist Party—but they have endorsed, and are going to help in the election of, cutters. . . . The cutters . . . have made a start—let the rest of the working class follow."² Margulies was defeated but Rosenberg and London were successful. Local 10 had travelled far since the days when Powderly was warning the members of Gotham

¹*The Ladies' Garment Cutter*, October 5, 1918.

²*Ibid*, October 12, 1918.

to avoid politics. The menacing drift of the republic toward an oligarchy of reaction under the stimulus of war was reinforcing the educational work in behalf of independent party action which the new element had been carrying on for many years. There was no attempt to coerce unwilling members and in this policy the local showed good judgment.

Fear of the assertion of working class power in New York City induced the Republican Assembly at Albany in January, 1920, to expel five Socialists on the amazing ground that they had been elected on a platform "inimical to the best interests of the State of New York and of the United States." This was the culminating action of what has been justly called a "reign of terror" in the United States and it proved a turning point in the movement to resist attempts on the part of our most reactionary classes to destroy the last remnant of civil liberties. All the Tammany members of the Legislature but four voted with the Republicans on this "ouster." Members of Local 10 were quick to see in this action a justification of their fears of what war would bring. President Gompers was also frantically appealing to the unions of the country to protest to Congress against peace-time sedition bills that would "take away the liberties of the people by placing them under a secret police surveillance more abhorrent than

that in any foreign monarchy,"¹⁹ Not since the administration of the elder Adams in the closing years of the eighteenth century was the United States so near an intolerant and reactionary dictatorship of corporate capital.

Local 10 immediately protested against the Albany usurpation and elected two delegates to a protest convention which met in Albany on January 31. Six hundred delegates representing trade unions and civic bodies from all parts of the State met and pledged support of the ousted assemblymen but a majority of the Assembly ratified the expulsion and repeated this extra-legal act the following September. The desperate Assembly majority followed the first expulsion by passing the notorious Lusk-Fearon, Anti-Educational and Anti-Socialist bills which were intended to conscript the minds of teachers, to establish reactionary political control of private schools, to create a special bureau for the investigation of "criminal anarchy," and to exclude the candidates of the Socialist Party from the ballot. Local 10 sent a committee to Albany where, with representatives of other organizations, it protested to Governor Smith against the bills. His veto halted the march of New York State back to the Middle Ages. In a special election in September the five ex-

¹⁹*Justice*, February 6, 1920. The appeal of Mr. Gompers appears in full in this issue.

elled assemblymen were re-elected but were again deprived of their seats. Three were expelled and the remaining two left the Assembly in protest against the expulsion of their colleagues.

In the same year Eugene V. Debs was serving a sentence of ten years in a Federal penitentiary for delivering an address in which he declared his opposition to the war. In May the International met in convention in Chicago and amid roars of applause it endorsed Debs for President of the United States. Local 10 had the honor of introducing the resolution one section of which declared that as "the Socialist Party is putting forth as its candidate an old standard bearer of industrial and political emancipation whose readiness to sacrifice and suffer for these ideals makes him the noblest leader of the proletarian army, which stands for a just and better future," therefore the endorsement with a pledge of financial support.¹⁰

Within the next few years there was considerable agitation in the trade unions for the organization of a Labor Party and in New York City an American Labor Party was formed in July, 1922. In structure it consisted of the affiliation of trade unions, branches of the Farmer-Labor Party, the Socialist Party, and of the Workmen's Circle. The only exception made

¹⁰*Justice*, May 14, 1920.

THE OLD REGIME AND THE NEW



John C.
RYAN

Jesse P.
COHN

Elmer
ROSENBERG

David
DUBINSKY

John C. Ryan and Jesse Cohen, representative of the old regime; Elmer Rosenberg and David Dubinsky, representative of the new.

was that of Communist organizations. They were excluded on the ground that experience had shown that cooperation with them was impossible. The Executive Board of Local 10, upon receipt of an invitation to affiliate with the American Labor Party, recommended this course to the members of the local on March 26, 1923, and the local voted to affiliate.

In the meantime the Conference for Progressive Political Action had been organized in Chicago in February, 1922. This convention was a symptom of the general dissatisfaction of the organized masses with the two leading political parties. Its chief source of support was derived from the railroad brotherhoods but associated with them in the organization were representatives of the needle trades unions, the Farmer-Labor Party, the Socialist Party and some farmer organizations. The history of this organization and its several conferences belongs to the general history of the American trade unions and national politics in the period from February, 1922, to February, 1925. Here we are only concerned with the relation of Local 10 to this movement. Robert M. LaFollette became the independent candidate for President of organizations affiliated with the Conference in 1924. The American Labor Party was represented at the conference which nominated LaFollette. The Boston Convention of the International that

year had also sent delegates to the conference. The Executive Board of Local 10 reported the LaFollette nomination to the members on September 8 and recommended support of the nomination and participation in the campaign. This was approved and delegates were also sent to the city and state conventions.¹¹

Thus over a long period we have briefly traced the evolution of political ideas and action in the organized cutters of New York City. In reaching its present attitude in the matter of using the political power of the workers there was no abrupt break by Local 10 with the past. It has adjusted itself to the advanced sections of the labor army in this respect. When the Socialists stepped back a pace or two by modifying their program and policies in order to march with the organized masses who was dissatisfied with the old two-party traditions, Local 10 adjusted itself to the new situation by affiliating with the American Labor Party and supporting the LaFollette-Wheeler ticket in 1924.

As for the Communist phase of the history of Local 10 it was too weak to shape any policies of the local but as a disturbing factor it cannot be ignored and this theme is reserved for another chapter.

¹¹*Ibid.*, September 12, 1924.

CHAPTER XII

THE AMERICAN BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION

In the transition from an old order to a new one, whether it be in a trade union or in society, there are those who for one reason or another are unable to adjust themselves to the new era. Within the period considered in the last chapter there occurred an episode which recalls the statement of Sumner in his *Folkways* that for those who live in the past, the "right" way "is the way which the ancestors used and which has been handed down." Usage and tradition weigh heavily with them and these do not stimulate thought. In fact, the thinking is already done and is embodied in the usages and traditions. A new order had arrived in Local 10 but usage and tradition organized as The American Benevolent Association only to expire in shame and bring obloquy to a number of members.*

*The A. B. A. adopted a statement of its aims on March 29, 1919, of which the following is a summary: It desired to "promote the welfare of its members" and to "encourage the principles of Americanism." It endorsed the principles of trade unionism "as defined by the American Federation of Labor" and believed that "the

The election of local officials in December, 1918, was sweeping for the new element but the results merely confirmed the drift of opinion for a number of years. Isidore Epstein was defeated as Secretary of the Executive Board by Elmer Rosenberg. The Welfare League had once before opposed Epstein by nominating Charles Stein, who was defeated because league members did not support him wholeheartedly. In the previous month the World War came to an end and interest in that bloody struggle was succeeded by interest in the coming peace conference in Paris, the revolutions in Central Europe, the increasing number of strikes in the United States and fears of Bolshevism at home and abroad. The policy of "social peace" in industry, which had been maintained through the influence of President Wilson, gave way to a nation-wide attack on the trade unions by associations of employers in favor of the "open shop" and these associations were demanding a "deflation of labor," i.e., a general reduction of wages. Reaction was in the saddle and legislative pro-

American republic as instituted by the fathers constitutes the finest system of government ever ordained among men and affords machinery for righting grievances without resort to violence, tumult and disorder." Any "deviation from these principles tends to create strife and must eventually result in schism." A final paragraph declares it "our bounden duty to oppose any organization or individual that seeks to disrupt the American labor movement and the overthrow of the American Republic." I am indebted to Nicholas Jagoe for a copy of this document.

posals in Congress and State Legislatures showed a menacing tendency to transform the republic into an oligarchy dominated by the great banks and corporations. Every strike to resist the lowering of union standards or to improve them, as well as every organization and movement not under the dominion of the two leading political parties, were condemned as manifestations of "Bolshevism."

It is necessary to recall this background of intellectual mania, economic greed and political reaction to understand the appearance of the American Benevolent Association. This became an organized group in the union shortly after the local election in December, 1918, and had it been confined to the purposes at first outlined by its leaders it would have been as legitimate as the Welfare League. The intention was to group the "old timers" and other sympathetic members of Local 10 into an organization to win back the power that had slipped from their hands and to enact what union policies the group believed to be essential to an effective union. What odium attaches to the group is not shared by all its members, who numbered less than a hundred, but to a handful of leaders who were repudiated when it became apparent what these leaders represented and to what they were leading.

In December, 1918, the employers' associa-

tions in the dress and waist industry were negotiating with President Schlesinger of the International and a committee of the unions for a new agreement. The employers insisted on the right to discharge, freedom in selecting workers, no recognition of the principle of equal distribution of work, and no continuance of employment "except by express agreement between the workers individually and the employers." To concede these demands would have meant the eventual destruction of the unions and they appeared to be a part of the general movement of the employing class to destroy all the unions of the country. In January, 1919, the Manufacturers' Association posted notices in the shops notifying the workers to report grievances to the firm for adjustment which meant ignoring the unions and their official representatives. Some 12,000 workers in the waist and dress industry were involved in the strike which followed. On January 13 over a thousand dress and waist cutters voted to strike and placed directing power in the hands of the strike committee. The strike began on January 21 with the cutters demanding a 44-hour week, a 15 per cent. increase in wages, and the right to visit shops to insure that labor standards were not being violated.

The struggle continued into April and presented a fine demonstration of solidarity except for a handful of cutters. The employers were

defeated, the union was recognized, and the demands of the workers were conceded with a few modifications. This was followed by the successful strike of the cloakmakers the following month which won an increase in wages, introduction of week work, a 44-hour week, the union shop throughout the industry, payment of overtime on the basis of time and a half, except cutters who received double pay, and other concessions.

During the strike in the waist and dress industry the Executive Board of Local 10 turned its attention to the actions of leaders of the American Benevolent Association. Charges were preferred against Isidore Epstein, John F. Pierce, Samuel Martin, Edward Fine, Albert Kolb and Jesse S. Greenberger for obstructing the strike. The board declared that these members had "attempted to frustrate the efforts of the union to better the conditions of the cutters engaged in the waist and dress industry by means of creating dissension in the ranks; carrying on a propaganda asking people not to strike before the strike was called; later when the strike was on they had advised members not to come down on strike unless all the girl operators came out; in some cases advised people to remain at work if 50 per cent of the girls did not come out, and in still other cases actually sent people to work in struck houses. This work was done by these

members with the cooperation of the employers who were naturally interested in seeing some or all cutters stay at work while a strike was being conducted.”¹

These were grave charges. Pierce, Martin and Greenberger had long and honorable records running back to the days of the Gotham Knife Cutters and Epstein had joined Local 10 in 1901, had held many responsible positions, including that of delegate to five conventions of the International. The other two accused men had also been active union members. The executive board did not act hastily. The offenses charged against the accused men dated back to December, even before the strike which began on January 21. A dozen sworn statements were obtained which represented the testimony of 19 members of Local 10, one dropped member and one shop foreman. The tendency of all this evidence was extremely damaging to the accused men.

From this documentary material we are able to construct a narrative of the actions of the leaders of the American Benevolent Association. They apparently acted independent of the members of the group and without their knowledge or consent. The motives that prompted the leaders were mixed, including personal pique, some

¹The charges, affidavits, and the vote of the members in this case are preserved in the records of Local 10.

members charged, because they no longer held responsible positions in Local 10. In February, 1918, President Harry Berlin ruled that Martin and Fine could not be accepted as candidates for election as delegates to the convention of the International because they had not worked two months in the trade preceding the election. Greenberger appealed from the ruling but the appeal was rejected by the members. In the following November Martin was nominated for President and Max Margulies objected on the ground that Martin "was employed as manager and superintendent by a cloak house." Berlin ruled that Martin's name could not appear on the ballot for this or any other office and Epstein appealed from the ruling. Berlin was sustained by a vote of the members whereupon Epstein insisted that he be recorded as nominating Martin. This shows four of the leaders of the American Benevolent Association in close sympathy with each other and it was in the election in December that the "new comers" won a sweeping victory. A later phase in the career of the American Benevolent Association, which will be considered later, shows that Martin and his close associates, under the stress of war mania, were willing to abandon the whole basis of the trade union movement for a policy that would have sterilized the trade unions of the country.

and made them the playthings of any emotional waves that might sweep the nation.

The A. B. A. had aroused bitterness before the strike was called. When members of Local 10 met to consider the question of a strike in the dress industry the local leaders received information which led them to believe that the A. B. A. would attempt to prevent the members from voting. A squad of twenty policemen was stationed in the basement, ready for service if needed.

The evidence of the actions of the leaders, just before the strike in the dress and waist industry was called and while the struggle was on, is not pleasant reading. Before the strike order was issued the American Benevolent Association had established headquarters in Tonawanda Hall at 28th Street and Third Avenue. Here it functioned sometimes as a dual union, or as an obstructive group, then as a recruiting agency for the employers, and, according to some affidavits, in intimate association with some bosses. Joseph P. Hirsch and Hyman Rosenthal, members of Local 10, swore that before the strike was called the foreman of the firm of Lefcourt & Brenner announced that a meeting of cutters would be held in Tonawanda Hall. A number of these affidavits show that the foremen of shops were the agents for announcing the time and place of meetings of the American Bene-

volent Association. The cutters of the above mentioned shop attended the meeting which was addressed by Pierce and Epstein who advised them to agitate against the strike. The following day the foreman who had announced the meeting presented a petition in the shop for the cutters to sign asking Local 10 not to call a strike. Only three or four signed. In another shop where the foreman made a similar announcement of a Tonawanda Hall meeting a loyal member of Local 10 went. He swore that due to the persuasion of Pierce the cutters of two shops remained at work during the entire period of the strike while the cutters of another shop worked one week after the strike call before they joined the strike.

There is a repetition of these incidents in practically all the affidavits, with the "boss" or "foreman" generally figuring as the mouthpiece for shop announcements of the American Benevolent Association. There were cases reported of a leader coming into a cutting room with the foreman. The affidavit of Harry Reisher declares a short time before the strike was declared "the boss came into the cutting room with Isidore Epstein. The shop steward, Cohen, was called over and told by the boss in the presence of Epstein not to forget to attend the meeting of the American Benevolent Association on 28th street. The meeting was addressed by Pierce, with Epstein

and Martin sitting on the platform with him. Pierce told the men that the strike would be a failure and asked them to leave the union and join their organization instead." This advice would suggest that the leaders thought of the possibility of attracting enough cutters to organize an independent union to oppose Local 10. This was an early phase of the activity of the leaders which gave way to the policy of obstruction of the strike in one form or another. Puzzled and curious cutters who went to the Tonawanda Hall meetings were told that the 44-hour issue was a "fake," that the strike was an "injustice to the country," that only the union officials desired the strike. The cutters at one of these meetings were so enraged at the speaker that they broke up the meeting and left the hall. The foreman of the MacKaner & Milius shop told the cutters that the firm had been promised all the cutters needed from the American Benevolent Association. Occasionally cutters who argued against the pleas of foremen were denounced as "Bolsheviks."

Speakers at the meetings of the American Benevolent Association were repeatedly denounced by cutters and questions were often hurled at the platform. A question often asked was whether urging cutters not to strike was not treason and scabbing. The usual answer was no, but that it was "an honest and conscientious con-

viction that at the present time of reconstruction and unrest it was a duty to protest against the strike."

Whether the leaders were receiving money from the bosses and, if so, how much, is a question which cannot be answered conclusively. However, they were giving much of their time to the work revealed in these affidavits and the frequent meetings called at Tonawanda Hall involved an outlay of considerable funds. The members of the American Benevolent Association did not contribute these funds for they repudiated the activities of the leaders. It is hardly creditable that a half-dozen leaders would draw upon their own financial resources to pay for these meetings. Moreover, in all questionable financial transactions the parties to them always take every precaution to guard against any disclosures and where actions may suggest a money consideration the actions are easy to analyze. The situation is different in the case of payment for services. Knowledge of it is confined to the parties to the bargain and unless one party discloses what occurred the truth can never be known.

There is only one affidavit that throws any light on this phase of the actions of the leaders and this was made by Israel Lewin who died in June, 1924. Lewin joined Local 10 in 1910 and was Manager of the Dress Division in the strike

of 1919. He served the local in a number of responsible positions, was a man of integrity, devoted to the cause of the working class, and respected by all who knew him. On April 30, 1919, Lewin swore to an affidavit which, because it is the only document which refers to alleged financial dealings between the leaders of the American Benevolent Association and the bosses, is here quoted in full:

"Mr. Israel Lewin being duly sworn according to law deposes and says, that on April 30, 1919, he visited the shop of the Florsheimer Company, 159 Madison Avenue, and in the course of the conversation that he had Mr. Albert Florsheimer of the above named firm made the following statement: that on Thursday, January 16, 1919, Messrs. John F. Pierce and Isadore Epstein of the American Benevolent Association called upon him at this place of business and promised him that they would see to it that the cutters would remain at work. Mr. Albert Florsheimer further stated that on January 25, 1919, he was approached by Mr. MacKaner of the firm of MacKaner and Milius of 136 Madison Avenue in which Mr. MacKaner suggested that Mr. Albert Florsheimer pay \$500.00 to a certain group of people that called themselves the American Benevolent Association, headed by Messrs. John F. Pierce and Isidore Epstein in return for which the firm of Florsheimer and

Company would be supplied with sufficient cutters to work while the strike in the Waist & Dress industry was on. Mr. Florsheimer further said that he thereupon drew a check for the sum of \$500.00 payable to Mr. MacKaner, who was at that time the go-between between the said American Benevolent Association and Manufacturers.

"Mr. Israel Lewin further states that this statement is the exact statement made by Mr. Albert Florsheimer on the day of April 30, 1919."

Pierce, Fine, Epstein, Martin, Greenberger and Kolb were summoned before the Executive Board. In the affidavits it appears that Alexander Bloch had cooperated with these members but he was not a member of Local 10 at that time. The accused men appeared before the board and with the exception of Greenberger they declined to answer questions until written charges were presented to them. The board considered this in executive session and decided that the object of the request was "to delay action." The practice of the Executive Board had been to hear all cases without the presentation of charges in writing. The accused members were aware of this practice as they had served on the board and had never given defendants charges in writing. The board declared Pierce, Epstein, Martin and Fine "guilty of having attempted to obstruct the strike, urged men to scab, encour-

aged manufacturers to prolong the struggle against the workers in the waist and dress (industry) and with thus having betrayed the interest of the members of Local 10 to the employers." The board recommended the expulsion of these four members and reserved action on Greenberger and Kolb for further investigation.* At a special meeting on May 17, 1919, notice of which had been sent to the four accused members but who failed to attend, the affidavits and other testimony were presented to over 1,000 cutters. All but one voted for expulsion.

The month before this action was taken sixty members of the American Benevolent Association signed a resolution repudiating the association which named Martin, Epstein, Pierce, Greenberger and Bloch "as the main agitators" who had been used "as tools of the Manufacturers' Association and are being used as a strike-breaking agency. . . . While they were being fed out of the crib of the union, they pretended to be good union men, but having lost power they believe in a rule or ruin policy." The expelled members sent a communication

*The cases against Kolb and Greenberger were dropped for lack of evidence. Martin was readmitted in January, 1922, upon payment of a fee of \$100 but was deprived of the privilege of holding office in the union for five years. He had responded to the strike call in the cloakmakers' strike and this induced the members to vote for his readmission.

requesting that a judiciary committee try their case and this came before a meeting of Local 10 on May 26. The local took no action on the request. Having been condemned not only by the members in a local meeting but also by most of the members of the American Benevolent Association, it is apparent that the evidence was convincing to practically all members.

With the desertion of the American Benevolent Association by its sincere members this group disappeared from Local 10 but it appeared in another role. In its later phase it probably represented only the accused men. Before considering this final phase of the association attention must be called to two incidents in relation to the group leaders that do not appear in the affidavits upon which they were convicted. In the morning *World* of April 17, 1919, there appeared an advertisement in the classified "want" columns as follows:

CUTTERS experienced on cloaks and suits; good pay; open shop conditions.

Apply 37 E. 28th st., Room 601, 10 o'clock.

This was the address of the American Benevolent Association. Fifty or more unemployed cutters called in response to the advertisement. Pierce denied that the association was responsible for the advertisement, saying that it "was

undoubtedly inserted by the anti-American agitators we are fighting" and who hoped "to discredit us by making it falsely appear that we do not stand for union principles but favor the open shop." The *World* story carrying this repudiation of the advertisement also carried the statement that the association was "organized to oppose anti-American propaganda among their fellow workers, many of whom are foreigners with radical views."² These statements show that the leaders before being expelled were capitalizing the war mania and reaction against their fellow members of Local 10. As for the advertisement, there is no further evidence available regarding its origin.

The other incident was a meeting held in Carnegie Hall on April 19 under the auspices of the Association. It was advertised as an "Americanization" meeting which was a rather questionable venture, considering that the ladies' garment industry had just passed through the strike in the waist and dress shops and it was known that the cloakmakers were facing a struggle. There was plenty of work for members of the unions to do without taking part in a crusade that was being capitalized by the employing class throughout the country. The meeting was a small affair. James P. Holland of the State Federation of Labor as chairman devoted his

²*New York World*, April 18, 1919.

speech to an attack on "Bolshevism." Alexander I. Rorke, Assistant District Attorney, urged the deportation of all radicals who "refused to accept American principles." A cable was read from President Wilson extending good wishes to the meeting which then adjourned.³ Who paid the large sum required to hold a meeting in Carnegie Hall we do not know but it is certain that the members of the American Benevolent Association did not pay it as they had deserted the group.

After the expulsions little was heard of the association till the following September when Pierce and Epstein obtained considerable publicity in the newspapers in a propaganda against "radicalism," "Bolshevism," and for the abandonment of all strikes for six months. To appreciate what this agitation meant it must be recalled that the year 1919 was an abnormal year. The press of the nation reeked with stories of "Bolshevist," plots. It was the year of the big coal strike and the injunction of Judge Anderson against the miners; the May Day "bomb plot" of Attorney General Palmer; an armed march of West Virginia miners against the hired police of the mine owners; the greatest strike in the steel industry; the strike of the Boston policemen; mobs in New York protesting against the playing of German music; the drive of Kol-

³*New York World*, April 20, 1919.

chak in Russia to restore the Romanoffs while the United States Senate was "investigating Bolshevism." In New York City the actors were on strike. So were the garment workers and the pressmen in the job offices, while over 700 printers "took a vacation." In October over 100,000 workers on ships and piers went out and in the same month 10,000 expressmen were on strike. In November there was a general raid of "reds" throughout the country and the first announcement of a general policy of deportations. In the same month the Lusk Committee raided over 70 places. In January, 1920, came the nation-wide raids of "radicals" in which nearly 5,000 men and women were the victims of illegal arrests. The same month brought the expulsion of the Socialist members of the New York State Assembly and every strike without exception was declared to be the result of "Bolshevist plotting."

It was this period of insane reaction, which a few leaders of the American Benevolent Association chose to join in a crusade that could only aid all those opposed to trade union struggles. Early in September, James P. Holland, President of the State Federation of Labor, issued a report to the press written by a Committee on the Cost of Living appointed by him. To the astonishment of the members of Local 10, John F. Pierce as chairman and Isidore Epstein as

secretary signed the report. The substance of the report was a recommendation that all strikes be abandoned for six months and that the workers should increase production to reduce the high cost of living, so that Labor and Capital shall "pull together . . . for the general good of all the people." Pierce and Epstein declared that "for trade unions to permit themselves to be brought under the influence of lawless agitation at this time of national stress is treason." They added that the charters of striking unions ought to be revoked. President Wilson's request for the suspension of strikes a few weeks before was declared to be based on "sound economic principles" and that the workers should "produce as much in eight hours" as they "formerly did in ten."⁴ The report caused a storm of protest in labor circles.

President Holland was non-committal as to what the Executive Council of the State Federation of Labor would do regarding the report but he was quoted as saying that "The report of the Pierce committee is the most important document that has come from organized labor recently." William Kohn of the Upholsters and chairman of the American Labor Party declared that the organized workers of the city would repudiate the report and added: "If charters issued by the State Federation of Labor are given to labor

unions to benefit the Merchants' Association, the quicker those charters are taken away from such unions the better."⁵ Pierce and Epstein, according to publicity in the press, were also consulting with the Merchants' Association. Other prominent labor men denounced the report, including Ernest Bohm, Secretary of the Central Federated Union, who declared it an "underhanded attempt to stampede the American labor movement." The resentment became so widespread that Holland dismissed Pierce and Epstein the day after the report appeared in the press, repudiated the report, and declared that its authors had not sent him a copy of it. The question immediately arose as to when Pierce and Epstein were appointed, before they were expelled by Local 10 or after. Holland declared that he had appointed them before their expulsion but he did not mention the date of the appointment.*

Even if Holland was correct, this did not relieve him of censure. Pierce and Epstein were expelled from Local 10 on May 17 and their statement appeared in the press on September 2.

**New York World*, September 3, 1919. The American Labor Party represented by Kohn was organized in Chicago in 1919 and became the Farmer-Labor Party the following year. The American Labor Party of New York City, which came later, was a federation of Farmer-Laborites, Socialists, Trade Unions and branches of the Workmen's Circle.

*An effort to obtain from Mr. Holland the date of the appointment of Pierce and Epstein has been fruitless.

Why were they retained on the committee for four months after they were expelled? Some labor men insisted that Holland knew they were expelled, that he had approved the report, and had been so quoted in the *World*. The whole affair was a nasty piece of business and reflected no credit on some men holding positions of influence and power in the labor movement.

Upon receipt of the letter dismissing them, Pierce and Epstein wrote Holland that "The sole object of our report was to relieve the country of the complications caused by the many unnecessary, unjust, and, under trade union laws, illegal strikes that are in progress, or which might hereafter be precipitated by reckless self-seeking leaders." They declared that they would retract nothing and would apologize for nothing.⁶ Their report came before the Central Federated Union on September 12. That body repudiated it and branded its authors as "scabs."⁷

Ten days later metropolitan newspapers carried the news that Pierce and Epstein had organized the "League of A. F. of L. Members for Partnership and Industrial Democracy" which they claimed represented 28 "trades." The program of this organization was a very ambitious one. Its authors offered it as a solution for the general industrial unrest throughout

⁶*New York Times* and *New York World*, September 7, 1919.

⁷*New York World*, September 13, 1919.

the country. The newspaper publicity took the form of a long letter addressed to President Gompers of the A. F. of L. They recommended the organization of "a league for industrial peace with organizations representing employers and employes" to enforce "any decisions that may be agreed on." The authors would have the organization create a supreme council similar to the council created by the League of Nations and empower it to adjust labor disputes and enforce its decisions. The President of the United States should be an ex-officio member of the American Federation of Labor and advisory member of the Executive Council. With the consent of four members of the Executive Council of the A. F. of L. the President of the United States should be vested with power "to proclaim the existence of a national emergency" and to suspend strikes until the emergency had passed. As for the "League of Peace," the President of the United States was to designate organizations with instructions to report "a treaty of peace between the warring factions and to devise a covenant of the League of Industrial Peace" which was to be binding after acceptance by organizations of employers and workmen. The authors advised that a conference should be called in October whereupon "an armistice shall be declared by President Wilson, and all strikes and lockouts shall thereupon automatically cease."

They also recommended a sliding scale of wages based on the cost of living.⁸

The "League of Peace" does not appear after this publicity and its authors sank into obscurity. In another chapter below where the Communist nuclei in Local 10 is considered we observe the law of imitation making its impress on this group which attempted to imitate some phases of the career and policies of the Communists of Russia. The recommendations of Pierce and Epstein also express this law of imitation. They would apply to American industry and trade unions a structural organization suggested by the League of Nations. Like the "nuclei," they believed that they had found a universal solution for the economic problems of modern society. Their willingness to place enormous coercive power in the hands of the President of the United States, a power that would be a grave menace to the initiative, independence and freedom of the trade unions, is suggestive of the conservatism of the authors. Imagine a reactionary President vested with this power!

Thus passed the American Benevolent Association. The mass of the "old timers" were quick to repudiate it when the leaders began a course of action that could not be misunderstood. It is

⁸The program of Pierce and Epstein may be consulted in the *New York World*, September 17, 1919, and the *New York Sun*, October 3, 1919.

to the credit of Local 10 that only a handful of men were involved in this phase of its history.

NOTE

Mr. Isidore Epstein, one of the expelled members, submits to the author a statement regarding the American Benevolent Association of which the following is a digest:

For years the character of the membership of Local 10 had been changing, the newer element being of a radical type and some of the new leaders capitalized this radicalism. Nearly every action of the local was determined by its relation to the radical point of view—who should hold office, what should be the relations with other organizations, etc. The radicals came to outnumber the older and active members and dissatisfaction followed. A group organization, the Loyalty League, was formed for the mutual welfare of its members but this was diverted into a political organization to elect certain candidates. Later a banquet was given for the "old timers" and the paramount issue became an economic one, that of obtaining a position and holding it. The "old timers" believed that the controlling element of the local were getting the best jobs and planned an organization to protect the old members. The result was the American Benevolent Association. Its chief object was to obtain positions in the better shops to the exclusion of

the newer members as the A. B. A. believed that "old timers" were being displaced in the shops by "new comers" with the connivance of those who controlled the local. There was no intention of combating the union itself. One requirement of membership in the A. B. A. was good standing in Local 10. Its misfortune was that it was organized during a general strike. The numerous strikes in the waist and dress industry convinced A. B. A. members that they were being made "goats" for Local 25. While the local unions were meeting in Madison Square Garden the A. B. A. met to consider its policy should a strike be called. It decided that in every shop where the girls went out the cutters would also go out; where the girls remained the cutters would remain, temporarily. This caused confusion, the A. B. A. was regarded as a strike-breaking organization, and its leaders were accused of attempting to disrupt the union. In a short time the A. B. A. disintegrated and its leaders were expelled. Epstein declares that the request for a trial on charges preferred by the Executive Board was denied. He declares that his appeal was filed without action, and that an appeal to the International was returned unopened. He admits that it was the usual procedure of the Executive Board to try members without written charges but contends that when such charges were demanded they were given.

Considering the grave nature of the charges in this instance, that the Executive Board was the accuser, and that if a trial was held the accusing body would be the trial court, he and his associates believe they were entitled to some more equitable procedure in dealing with their cases.

CHAPTER XIII

EXPANSION AND PROGRESS

Although the episode considered in the previous chapter was annoying Local 10 had become a disciplined organization which had been making important conquests for a number of years and its advance could not be checked by a few misguided or sour individuals. The war years had stimulated the garment industry as they had most other industries, although the men's clothing industry was more favorably affected by war orders. In 1916 Local 10 obtained \$27.50 per week for full-fledged cutters, double pay for overtime, and a 49-hour week. This represented an increase of \$2 for cutters earning less than \$20 and \$1 for those earning more.

Early in May of the same year a big strike in the cloak and skirt industries began after the Manufacturers' Protective Association refused an invitation by Mayor Mitchel to meet representatives of the International and the Joint Board. The struggle began as a lockout on the part of the manufacturers and ended with substantial gains for the union the following Au-

gust. The attitude of the manufacturers was accepted as a declaration of war against the unions and was answered by a general strike in the industry which was supported by the Joint Board of the Furriers, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, the American Federation of Labor, the United Hebrew Trades, the Central Federated Union and many other organizations. The Amalgamated Clothing Workers and the United Garment Workers were at war with each other and the International gave its sympathies to the former. This gave rise to the rumor that Samuel Gompers was opposed to the strike but he answered this by taking part in a number of meetings of the General Strike Committee and was photographed with the committee. This was the first big struggle under the leadership of Schlesinger. Sigman was still suffering from the effects of his trial. Schlesinger had the close co-operation of Morris Hillquit as legal advisor.

In July an agreement was reached which conceded the right to discharge in return for the right to strike against individual manufacturers, gave increases of from \$1 to \$1.50 per week, and advances to piece workers. This appeared to be unsatisfactory to the workers who through a heated meeting of 500 shop chairmen rejected the agreement. Dissatisfaction was also expressed by members of Local 10 in a general meeting, "old timers" and "new comers" being

agreed, but opposition cooled as the agreement became better known. Some revisions were made after a conference with the shop chairmen and the revised agreement was referred to a referendum vote which was adopted by about 70 per cent of the members. The new agreement provided for the preferential union shop, a 49-hour week, \$29 a week for cloak and suit cutters, while skirt cutters advanced from \$23.50 to \$25. Since 1913 the wages of waist and dress cutters had increased from \$20 to \$27.50. The agreement also eliminated a former discrimination in the distribution of work. "The gains made by the cutters as a result of their fourteen weeks race with starvation are highly important," said the weekly of Local 10.¹

Nevertheless, there was some dissatisfaction by other strikers who marched through the streets toward the *Jewish Daily Forward*. Such demonstrations are not a novelty among Jewish workers and they are generally directed against one person—generally the principal strike leader. In this case Schlesinger was the object of the demonstration and some years later Sigman received similar attention when the Governor's Commission was appointed. The Jewish and Italian masses are temperamental and are easily incited by clever agitation. Some compromises had to be made in the settlement and the ele-

¹The Ladies' Garment Cutter, August 5 and 12, 1916.

mental emotions which sway Jewish workers found an outlet in this parade when they failed to realize all the aims of the strike. Moreover, they chafe under the routine of the shop and wage system and practically all of them have the ideal of a cooperative order and democracy in industry. The *Daily Forward* is regarded as the spiritual spokesman of workers in the needle trades and vested with power to realize aims and right wrongs. The cutters do not participate in these marches as any disappointments that may come to them are expressed in their local meetings.*

Near the end of the year Local 10 decided to make a fight for the waist and dress cutters and a committee of five appointed by the Executive Board reported in January, 1917, in favor of a 20 per cent increase in wages and the 48-hour week. Other demands were to keep out apprentices for two more years, equal division of work, and requiring manufacturers to cut garments on their premises. The cost of living was advancing yet the Dress and Waist Manufacturers' Association rejected all these demands and presented their own which Local 10 declined to consider and the issues went before the Board of Arbitration provided by the protocol where the cutters were represented by Morris Hillquit.

*This paragraph is adapted from material submitted by Mr. Harry Lang.

The Board of Arbitration awarded some important concessions among which were equal distribution of work for full-fledged cutters and the following wage increases: Full-fledged cutters receiving a minimum of \$27.50 to receive a minimum of \$29; those receiving \$25 to get \$27.50 for the rest of the first year after examination and thereafter \$29 a week. The four grades of apprentices also received advances, A, \$7 per week; B, \$13.25; C, \$20; and D, \$23 respectively. However, the demand for the exclusion of new apprentices for two years was denied and the ratio of 1 apprentice to 5 cutters remained.

An important award was made in the matter of the discharge of cutters who graduated into a higher grade and which has been considered in Chapter X. The award provided that such discharges "for the purpose of evading the payment of such higher wage shall be deemed a wrongful discharge." This was a decision of vital importance to the waist cutters, as important as any increase in wages they might receive as it struck a blow at the vicious circle of low-paid labor in this section of the cutting trade. The demand for a 49-hour week and for cutting on the premises was denied. The waist and dress division of Local 10 accepted the awards despite considerable disappointment that they had failed to get all they desired. In the following month, February, Local 10 obtained increases

for the underwear cutters. The agreement with the Cotton Garment Manufacturers' Association provided for a minimum wage for full-fledged cutters of \$23, with certain minor exceptions; other workers in the cutting department receiving \$12 to get \$14, others receiving less than \$12 to receive an increase of \$1 and another dollar in March, 1918. Each firm a party to the agreement was required to employ at least one cutter, the minimum wage where no cutter had been employed to be \$17 and a minimum of \$8 for learners. Ten holidays were conceded by the agreement.

During this period Local 10 helped the Children's Dress Makers, then Local 50, to establish a strong union. It had been weakened and the International appointed H. Greenberg of Local 25, and Sam Martin of Local 10 to bring about a general strike in the children's dress industry. With the aid of an active group in Local 10, headed by Jesse Cohen, the strike was won and Local 10 came to occupy a conspicuous place in the International and the latter was winning the reputation which it now enjoys. It became a powerful factor in the general labor movement and the immigrant element became proud of it. This aroused jealousy of Locals outside the cloak industry and the International was charged with being exclusively a cloakmakers' organization. Mumblings were heard in unions

of the waist and dress industry but Local 10 had members in all branches of the industry and it became a connecting link between all the Locals. This intimate relationship of its members with all branches of the industry constituted a stabilizing factor and contributed something to minimizing the jealousies that had arisen.*

Meantime the nation was drifting into war while the local's activities had considerably expanded in recent years and financing them was becoming a problem. The International had increased the per capita tax $2\frac{1}{2}$ cents, the creation of the Waist and Dress Department with its larger staff, the care of the Miscellaneous Division, an increase in the salaries of the officers to keep pace with the mounting cost of living, and increased rent and office expenses, raised the question of an increase in dues. Editor Rosenberg feared that a surplus that is essential in time of strikes might be depleted unless the income of Local 10 was increased. The Committee on Constitution recommended an increase in dues from 16 to 20 cents but a special meeting defeated it. The proposal, unfortunately, was made at a period when a majority of the cutters faced a slack season and this induced the members to reject it. Later in the year the dues were increased to 21 cents.

*This paragraph is adapted from material submitted by Mr. Harry Lang.

In April the United States entered the World War and a few months later various members of Local 10 were being drafted for the Army or Navy. A standing notice in *The Ladies' Garment Cutter* informed members who had been drafted to call at the office of the union for information relative to exemption, payment of dues and other matters of importance to them during their period of service.

In the same year the local installed a medical department. Members who had joined the union since March 27, 1916, and all applicants for membership, were required to pass a medical examination. Those who failed to take the examination would not be entitled to a death benefit. In March the members also voted to affiliate with the sanatorium to be established at Kingston, N. Y., by various Locals of the International. Cutters who contracted tuberculosis and other chronic diseases had been left to shift for themselves and Local 10, having no special fund for such afflicted members, could render little aid. Medical examinations of members for several years had revealed a number of tubercular cases and the members voted a tax of 25 cents per annum for maintaining two beds at the sanatorium.

In June of this year Local 10 won an important case in a suit brought by the firm of Woolf & Shulhof for an injunction to permanently re-

strain the union from enforcing its rules against any members employed by this firm. Had the injunction been granted it would have served as a dangerous precedent. A union that cannot enforce its discipline in the shops where members work would be helpless to improve conditions and Local 10 was aware of the importance of the issue. Morris Rotenberg of the firm of Panken & Rotenberg represented the union, contending that when a cutter joined the union he entered into contractual relations with it, agreeing to obey its rules and regulations. If a cutter entered into a contract with an employer after having joined the union this did not automatically nullify the contract made by the member with the union. This contention was sustained by the Supreme Court which denied the application made by the firm.²

Having warded off this blow Local 10 next turned its attention to workers' education. The General Executive Board of the International in August, 1917, appropriated \$5,000 for educational work for the local unions. A Committee on Education composed of delegates from twelve unions, including Local 10, met in September under the direction of Elias Lieberman representing the International. Miss Juliet Stuart Poyntz, as educational director, outlined the work proposed for the members which was not

²*The Ladies' Garment Cutter*, June 30, 1917.

to be "highbrow stuff" but to study the history of the labor movement, the development of machinery, economics, trade unionism, grammar, English and to arrange lectures. In October a general outline of the courses and method of organizing and financing the work was reported by Lieberman and in December the International announced the opening of the Workers' University and a list of instructors and lecturers. The Washington Irving High School was obtained for the opening on December 1, the auditorium being crowded to capacity, and public schools were obtained from the Board of Education to carry on evening classes for the local unions.

One year before this venture into the field of workers' education Local 10 and other Locals affiliated with the Joint Board had arranged a series of notable lectures at the Rand School of Social Science by Morris Hillquit. There were five lectures in this course under the general title of "The Law and the Struggle of the Classes" which the editor of Local 10's weekly thought of sufficient importance to give them special display in *The Ladies' Garment Cutter*. These lectures and the expanding activities of the Rand School itself contributed much to popularizing the idea of workers' education for the garment workers.

As the year 1917 approached its close the cost of living continued to increase and the cutters,

in common with other workers throughout the country, complained of the decreasing purchasing power of the dollar. "Within the past two years," declared *The Ladies' Garment Cutter*, "necessities have risen 53 per cent. In other words, the purchasing power of the dollar has been reduced to 47 cents. Unbelievable as it may seem it is nevertheless true, since the figures are given out by the Department of Labor at Washington."³ In November the Waist and Dress Cutters presented demands for a 25 per cent increase in wages and a 48-hour week. This was followed by a demand for a 20 per cent increase by the Children's Dress and Underwear Cutters, who, within a few weeks, received an advance of \$2. The hours and wages asked by the Waist and Dress Cutters were referred to the Board of Arbitration and in December the Wrapper and Kimono Cutters formulated demands for a minimum wage of \$25 for markers and an increase of \$3 for all cutters in this department of the industry. As the year closed all cutters in the industry were restless and impatient for a readjustment of wages to the rapidly mounting prices of food and increasing rents.

Throughout the year 1918 there were repeated demands and negotiations in behalf of all types of cutters. These demands register the impact of the final year of the World War upon

³November 10, 1917.

all industries. There were demands or negotiations or both in the months of January, March, July, August, October and November and it would be tedious to attempt to consider them in detail. Only a brief summary can be given. The claims of the Waist and Dress Cutters extended into the new year but in January the employers conceded an increase of \$2 for cutters and assistants, the highest grade receiving \$31. In August this wage was increased to \$35 and corresponding increases conceded to apprentices. In March Underwear Cutters obtained a 48-hour week; cutters receiving \$12, received \$13 and those receiving less than \$12 were increased \$2. In July the Raincoat Cutters were increased from \$31 to \$35 and similar gains were made by the Cloak and Suit Cutters.* In October the Children's Dress Cutters won a flat increase of \$4, increasing the wage in one grade from \$25 to \$29 and in another from \$26 to \$30. In Novem-

*A conference was held between the union and manufacturers at which increases in wages were obtained. The scale of cutters was at that time \$31, and the conference awarded a \$4 increase. Some cutters were dissatisfied and a special meeting was called to consider the award. Many of the speakers who tried to defend the action of the conference committee were yanked off the platform. The crowd was so enraged that they would not permit Finkelstein, chief clerk of the Protective Association Department, to speak. It seemed that a general fight was imminent when Sam Perlmutter, a delegate to the Joint Board, obtained the floor and in a convincing speech succeeded in restoring order and intelligent consideration of the award became possible. After a long discussion the report was adopted by an overwhelming vote.

ber the Wrapper and Kimono Cutters obtained for full-fledged men an increase of \$4, raising the wage from \$26 to \$30, while all receiving more than \$26 obtained a minimum of \$31. These numerous changes in wage scales were made without necessitating a resort to strikes.

A multiplication of weekly papers by local unions in New York and two monthlies by the International involved considerable expense and duplication of effort which suggested the idea of amalgamating these publications. The local unions, including Local 10, published seven weeklies, three in English, two in Yiddish and two in Italian, while the International published one English and one Yiddish monthly. To combine all these into one English weekly issued by the International with Italian and Yiddish departments became an important administrative question in 1918 and in August the General Executive Board of the International announced its intention to effect the consolidation. Satisfactory arrangements were made with the Locals and on January 18, 1919, the last number of *The Ladies' Garment Cutter* appeared. A page was assigned to the New York cutters in the new publication, *Justice*, and a farewell editorial in the local's weekly welcomed the new organ, wishing it a long life and hoping that it "may secure in the very near future . . . the thing after which it is named, and the thing for which it

stands: *Justice*." However, this arrangement proved a disappointment for several months. The original budget for *The Ladies' Garment Cutter* had proved insufficient to cover the cost of its publication and at one time the members approved a tax of 50 cents to meet the deficit. After the consolidation of union publications Local 10 received little space in *Justice* and in many issues none at all. In July, 1919, the Executive Board considered the advisability of again issuing the local's weekly. The board informed the International that unless sufficient space was reserved in *Justice* for the cutters Local 10 would issue its own bulletin. Satisfactory arrangements were made and one page was assigned to Local 10, beginning with July 26, which the local has retained since that date.

In the year 1918 Local 10 made an important change in the election of its officers. The old United Cloak and Suit Cutters which expired in 1894-5 had elected officers for annual terms but when it was revived in 1901 it provided for semi-annual elections. Following the amalgamation of the cutters in 1906 the custom of semi-annual elections continued, but because of the large expenditure involved in frequent elections and the time taken from the consideration of union problems, the constitution was changed in 1918 and since that year the local's officials have been elected for annual terms.

Following the armistice in November, 1918, which ended the World War, there were ominous signs that the organized employers of the country would make an assault on wages and the trade unions. A number of the final issues of *The Ladies' Garment Cutter* gave warning of the coming struggle and the first to meet the attack were the workers in the waist and dress industries. The cutters' demands included a 44-hour week, a 15 per cent increase in wages, and the right of union officials to inspect shops to see that labor standards were being observed. The cutters were responsible for the demand for 44 hours in the waist and dress industry. This was at first opposed by leaders of the International but they finally made it a part of the strike program because of persistent efforts of members and officers of Local 10. The demands were submitted on December 19 and a month later the employers answered that they would concede no increase in wages, insisted on a 48-hour week, one apprentice to four cutters or a fraction of four, no graduated scale for learners, and double time for overtime only to cutters. A few days later 35,000 workers were on strike and in February, 1919, Local 10 voted to assess the cloak cutters \$12 in support of the strike.* In the

*Local 10 had taxed the members \$3 per week for the duration of the strike but two weeks after its enforcement the Executive Board was petitioned by over 100 members to call a special meeting to reconsider it. The board called a meeting which proved

same month the workers in the kimono and wrapper and children's dress sections of the industry joined the strike while the cloak and suit cutters prepared for a struggle. The white goods workers won the 44-hour week and an important break came in the ranks of the waist manufacturers in March when Mr. S. Fahrer, a member of the executive of the association in this trade, signed for the 44-hour week and an increase in wages. In April the workers in the cloak and skirt trade were presenting their demands, which included the 44-hour week, and a week later the strikers in the waist trade were victorious. On May 14 the workers in the cloak trade were called out and before the end of the month the 44-hour week and other concessions had been won.

The cutters hired a band and with a few barrels of beer and a liberal supply of sandwiches they celebrated the victory in Arlington Hall. President Schlesinger of the International was tendered a gift. The celebration was also intended as an answer to the A. B. A. propaganda

very stormy. Harry Berlin, chairman, was not permitted to remain in the chair and the other officers also met opposition. An attempt was made to throw Berlin out of the chair and replace him with a member from the floor while a number of officers tried to calm the members and make them understand the importance of the tax. Elmer Rosenberg, secretary, finally obtained order and the members decided to discontinue the tax but to collect \$12 from each member in installments of \$3 per week for four weeks, the period in which the tax had already been in effect.

against Local 10. A few weeks later a thousand cutters and a number of invited guests celebrated at a banquet in the Central Opera House.

The impression one gets of these battles in 1919 is that of a number of well-disciplined regiments belonging to one army. One regiment would be ordered to attack while the others were held in reserve, digging defenses, helping those at the front and as the latter returned victorious other troops were ordered on the fighting line. One fort after another was taken and when the struggle was over the 44-hour week was established in the industry. The offensive presented by the employers in the waist trade was turned into a defensive and then into a rout as firm after firm deserted the bosses' standard.Flushed with the victories, Local 10 in August voted to increase the examination fees of Waist and Dress and Cloak and Suit Cutters to \$35 which, added to the initiation fee of \$15, made the total for the admission of full-fledged cutters of \$50. In the Miscellaneous Branch the examination fee was increased to \$15, the initiation fee remaining \$10. Other Locals throughout the country followed a similar course.

This was a notable year, for "the offensive of 1919 differed from all previous similar movements in several ways. It was planful and systematic. Serious preparations, financially and otherwise, were made for the movement by most

of the Locals and the Joint Boards. It was unified in method as well as in purpose. The various strikes of which the movement consisted were more in the nature of a direct testing of power with the employers than any theretofore."⁴ These strikes also extended the principle of week-work in the industry. The cutter had always worked week-work and when the International in 1917 decided to break down the piece-work system the discussion over this issue which continued for many months found the cutters ranged in favor of week-work.⁵

The foremost fighter for week-work was Morris Sigman while many union officials and members opposed it. Sigman is a strong character, of iron will and perseverance, and would speak for hours to workers to convert them to week-work and in this he was aided by the Socialist press, the Jewish *Daily Forward* and the New York *Daily Call*. This gave the propaganda the appearance of a Socialist crusade and the cutters were often pointed to as having realized something of Socialism by their adherence to week-work. Hearing this claim, operators and finishers would smile and at one shop meeting where Sol Metz spoke in favor of week-work an operator, pointing to a cutter, said: "You see,

⁴Levine, *The Women's Garment Workers*, p. 331.

⁵For a general summary of the issues involved in week-work see Levine, *op. cit.*, pp. 322-29.

Brother Metz, our cutter plays craps with the boss. He is quite an artist at this 7-11 game. If he, an advocate of week-work, is a forerunner of Socialism you may keep your Socialism for yourself." As a result of this humorous incident the question was raised as to whether a cutter should be permitted to play craps with the boss and Metz referred the matter to the Grievance Board.

In the transition from piece work to week-work a new problem arose in Local 10. According to the scale for week workers the wages of operators were higher than the wages of cutters and all other crafts. The wage scale of the former was proportioned to their earnings on the piece work basis.

When week work was established, due to their prior earnings on a piece work basis, their scales were also made higher than those of the cutters. The cutters were very much dissatisfied but they could not help themselves. The operators, when they returned to work at the new scales, managed to obtain increases above their minimum scales so that although their minimum scale was \$44 the union settled the prices for individual workers as high as \$70, \$75 and \$80 per week. Up till then the cutters were considered the most law-abiding element in the trade. When the agreement called for a minimum scale of \$39, this was for them a maximum. But when

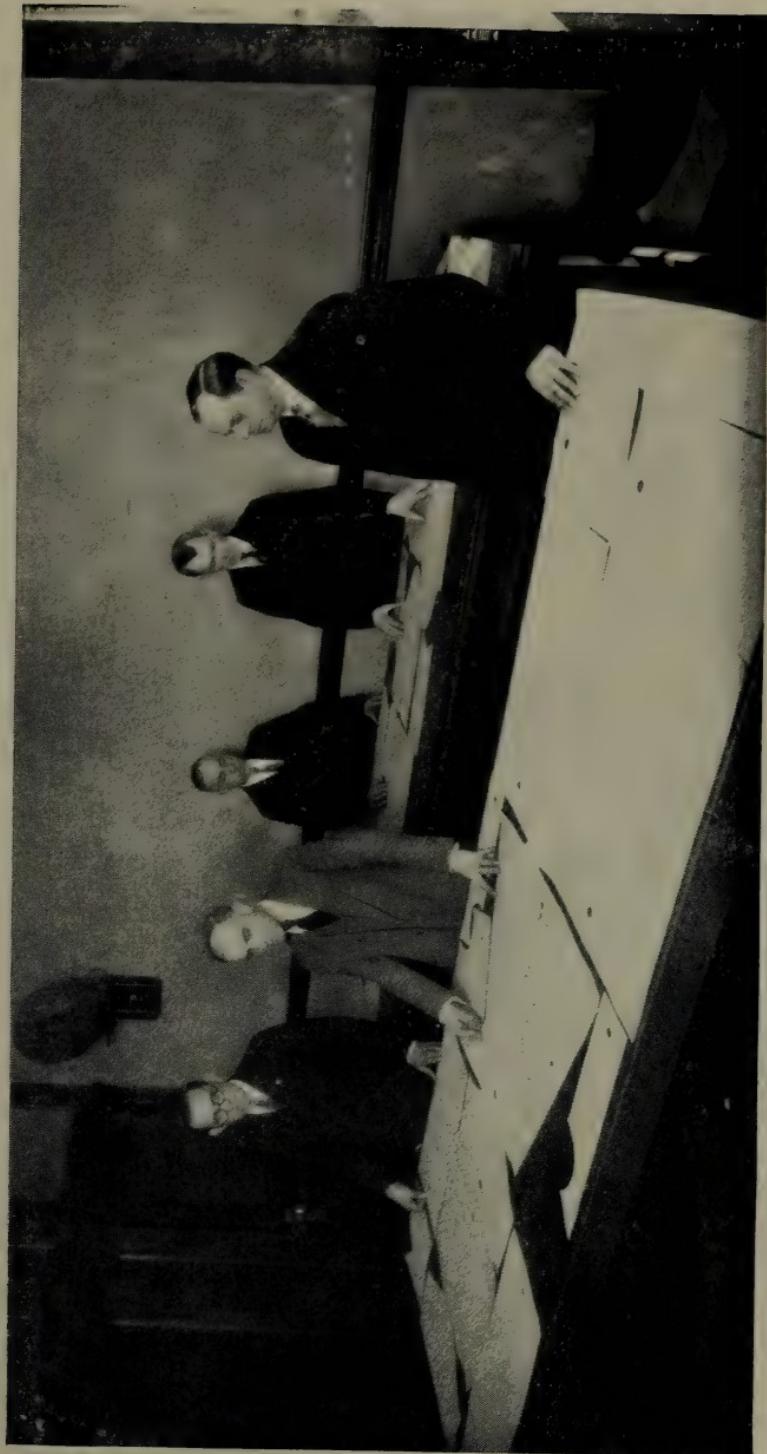
the other crafts began raising their wages above the minimum, the cutters too were affected by it and in the year 1919 the cutters for the first time began exacting wages above their minimum.

The accomplishment of this was a slow process. At that time their wages above the minimum ranged from \$2 to \$5 per week. Since then cutters considerably increased their wages above the minimum so that the average in 1926 was \$11 above the minimum, while in the other crafts it ran much lower than that.

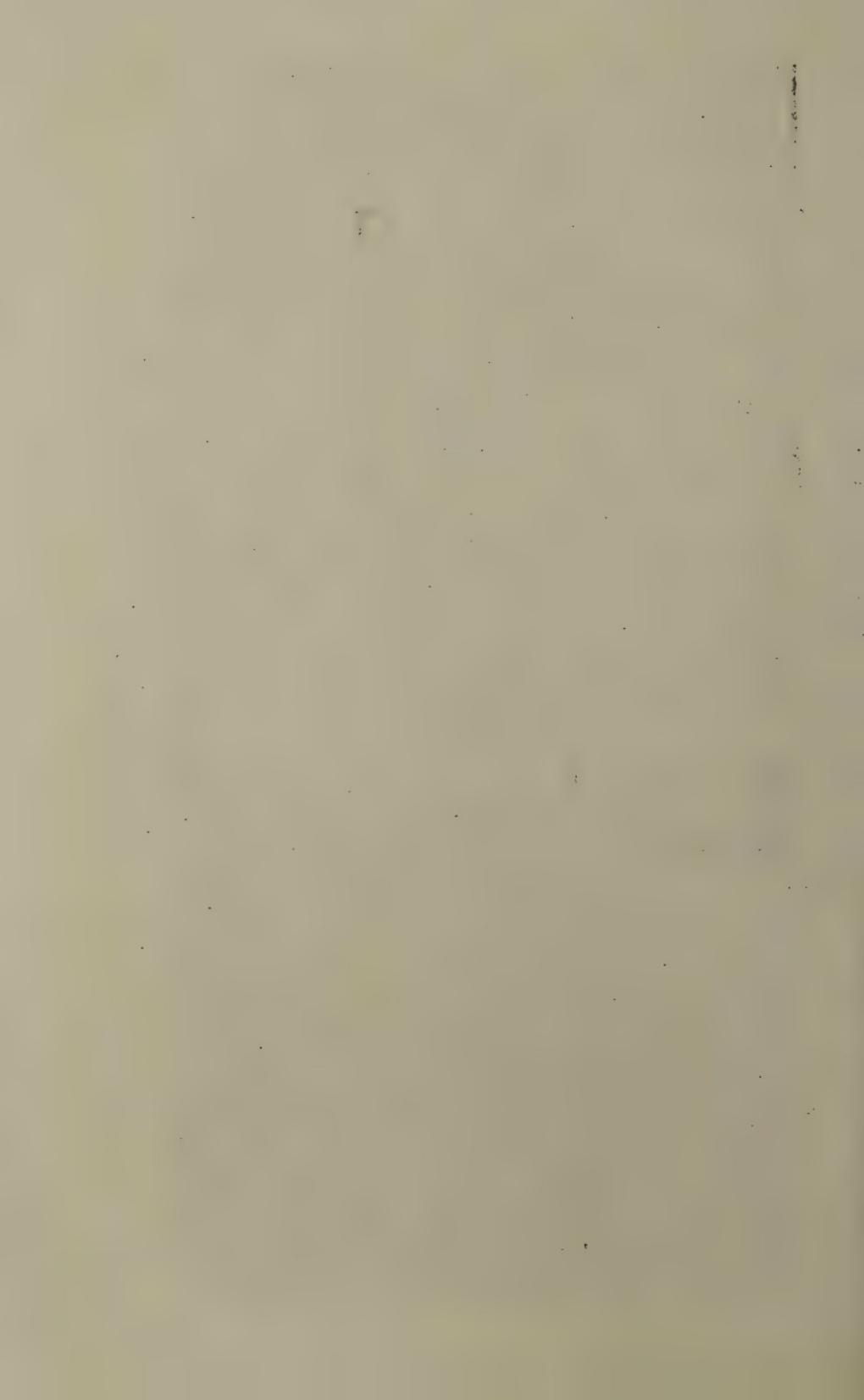
By the terms of the agreements the employers had the right to oppose these increases but the skillful leadership of Local 10 managed to avoid conflicts while the increases were being won.

The offensive in the waist and dress industry considered above was followed in 1920 by closer cooperation of the Locals in the industry. While the Locals frequently acted together, they in fact were not federated in one body. Each could call a strike and occasionally did so, which caused some friction. The convention of the International in 1920 voted to establish a Joint Board in the waist and dress industry of New York City and early in October the executive boards of Locals in the industry met at the call of General Secretary Baroff and organized the Joint Board on lines similar to the board in the cloak and suit industry. Local 10 participated in the organization and Joseph

EXAMINATION COMMITTEE EXAMINING APPLICANTS



*Table in Foreground: Meyer Katz, (extreme left) and Henry Liebowitz (extreme right) giving cutter an examination.
Table in Background: Abe Casper (left) giving cutter an examination.*



Fish, Hyman Goldberg, Philip Oretzky, Harry Berlin and Sam Sadowsky were elected delegates to represent the Waist and Dress Cutters on the board. Fearing that affiliation implied the transfer of election of business agents to appointment by the Joint Board, some members of Local 10 circulated a petition of protest but were answered that this change was not contemplated. Each of Local 10's business agents was assigned a district, including 60 shops where formerly four business agents of the local were each given some 300 shops which rendered control difficult and often partial or incomplete. The new arrangement made possible a more effective control of shops and closer cooperation in the matter of strikes.⁶

The same year brought proper affiliation of Local 10 with the Joint Board in the cloak and suit industry. While the local was affiliated with the Joint Board up to July, 1920, its business was directed from the office of Local 10. If the Joint Board called a shop strike, Local 10 called out the cutters. Instead of a per capita tax the cutters contributed \$100 a week to the Joint Board and also paid their own strike benefits. In this period the large shops were being replaced by small ones which made shop control more difficult for the union. In shops employing no cutter and where the boss did the

⁶*Justice*, December 17, 1920.

cutting, the Joint Board would be asked to call out the operators to force employment of a cutter. Because of the time, expense, and extra work this involved, the Joint Board demanded full affiliation by Local 10. This meant limitation of the local's autonomy. Morris Sigman, Manager, and Israel Feinberg, Chairman, of the Joint Board, favored the movement in Local 10 for proper affiliation. Dubinsky, Lewin, Perlmutter, Nagler, Lipschitz and Margulies were leading opponents of the proposal but as conditions of the cutters were bad and improvement was promised by advocates of the change, the opposition gave way.

Local 10 approved affiliation for six months with certain reservations. The reservations were that (1) complaints of cutters be made direct to Local 10; (2) that offenses against cutters' union rules be tried by the local, not by the Joint Board Grievance Committee; (3) that business agents of Local 10 be chosen by the local. At the same time an assessment of \$5 by the Joint Board brought a controversy. Cutters of the Toronto Cloak firm were instructed by the shop chairman to pay the assessment to the Joint Board. Local 10 claimed that its autonomy permitted collection by the local itself. The Toronto Cloak cutters declined to pay as the operators had also refused and Local 10 considered the action a move of the Joint Board

to coerce it. Fish, Lewin, Rothenberg and Dubinsky as a committee of Local 10 informed the Joint Board that its action might bring a serious conflict, that the local was responsible for the collection of the assessment, and that its members were not to be punished because of the qualified affiliation. Leaders of the Joint Board tried to get other cutters into the shop and Local 10 picketed the shop. For a time it appeared that closer affiliation had failed. The cutters' department in *Justice* (July 16, 1920) announced that the Joint Board had accepted the first two proposals for affiliation but had rejected the six months proviso. The department declared that the decision "leaves the situation just where it was before," but six weeks later (July 30) the six months reservation was left open for further negotiations and early in August it was conceded. Local 10 had employed four business agents added to the 50 employed by the Joint agents for the cloak department to cover about 1,500 shops and with the increase of shops it became more difficult to visit them. Local 10's agents added to the 50 employed by the Joint Board provided a more adequate staff for the cutters as well as for the other crafts.*

*With this closer affiliation, Local 10's business agents assumed their duties in the Joint Board. Isadore Nagler, who served as Business Agent of Local 10, was assigned to the Protective Department, Sam Perlmutter to the office of Manager of the Downtown

Late in 1920 the question of reconstructing the union was being considered and a proposal to consolidate the office of General Secretary with that of Manager of the Cloak and Suit Division was defeated by the members, but the need of structural changes continued to be a theme for discussion into the new year. In May, 1921, the Executive Board of Local 10 presented two recommendations for a reconstruction of the union and the members proved to be in a more favorable frame of mind. The first was that one secretary should assume the duties of the financial and general secretaries and the second that one General Manager should replace the three managers caring for the three divisions. The board estimated that a consolidation of the first two offices mentioned would save about \$3,000 each year and bring about greater efficiency. The second consolidation, the board declared, would effect a large saving of funds, center the work in one office, and bring the three divisions into a more cohesive solidarity. As one manager could not attend two Joint Boards and take care of the Miscellaneous Division, the plan provided for a sufficient number of business agents, the number to be determined by the Executive Board, who were to be responsible to the General Manager. These recommendations

Department, Julius Bender, to the Independent Department, and Meyer Sharp to the American Association Department.

were approved by the members on May 23 and a committee was appointed to work out the constitutional changes.

With the disappearance of the waist industry and the assimilation of the dress and cloak industries, where, in shops manufacturing cloaks, dresses were also made, and *vice versa*, the International faced the problem of merging the two Joint Boards. It was natural, then, for Local 10 to also consider merging all branches under one management in order to have one policy and one supervision of the union. Not to neglect the Miscellaneous Division, consisting of white goods, children's dresses, bath robes, wrappers and kimonos, it was decided that this branch should hold one meeting each month. A change was also made in the meetings of the local. Formerly each branch met once each month and in addition there was one general meeting of all the members, thus making four meetings each month. Under the new arrangement the local met the second and last Monday in each month. The fifteen members of the Executive Board were retained but instead of five being elected from each of three divisions the local elected thirteen and the Miscellaneous Division two.

In July the committee agreed on another change. This provided for the recall of officials by requiring members who accept nominations to sign resignations and giving the Executive

Board power to recall any official should he be proven unfit, after a trial, to serve. In September the members modified these proposals by requiring the Executive Board to refer to the members the names of business agents for ratification or rejection and providing the same procedure in the case of officers recalled by the board, with the proviso for a two-thirds vote of the members to concur. By October these changes had been ratified by the members.⁷

While the outstanding feature of the history of the New York cutters in the years 1920-21 was a reconstruction of the union, the latter year also began with a struggle in the waist and dress industry. The employers' organization in January insisted on a wage reduction of 20 per cent, the union to post \$10,000 to guarantee observance of a new contract, fining the union for any violation of the agreement, and the right to hire and fire at will. This was an attempt to nullify the gains won by the workers in 1919. In February 13,000 workers in the waist and dress industry were called out on a general strike but by the end of the month over 1,300 shops had settled with the union. The cutters responded to the call, including those working in quite a number of shops where other workers remained.*

⁷*Justice*, issues of May 27, July 1, 15, 22, September 2, 30 and November 4, 1921.

*A large number of waist manufacturers had large shops out of town and following the strike of April, 1919, defied union control

One departure was made by Local 10 in this strike which is important in that it became a vital issue in the strike of 1926. The cutters had been accustomed to meet in their own hall in previous strikes but since Local 10 had fully affiliated with the Joint Board, which believed "it would be inadvisable to segregate the cutters." In the strike of 1919 many cutters had also registered at their hall and then disappeared. In the strike of 1921 the Dress Joint Board decided that the cutters should not meet separately but should gather with other workers in their respective halls. Local 10 originally did not show any opposition to this arrangement. After one week of experience the matter came up again at a meeting of the Joint Board and it was decided that it was essential for the proper conduct of the strike to change the arrangements so that the cutters would have a separate hall.⁸

and were aided by an active injunction lawyer. In 1920 waist and dress cutters engaged in a number of strikes, won concessions in spite of injunctions, and the Waist and Dress Manufacturers' Association began to disintegrate. The dress manufacturers organized separately, negotiated with the union, the larger shops signed independent agreements and conceded important gains to dress cutters. Waist manufacturing soon disappeared. Sam B. Shenker, Manager of the Waist and Dress Division, insisted on the abolition of grading dress cutters and in this succeeded. The waist cutters were finally absorbed by the dress industry while the assistants in the large independent shops were gradually raised to the level of all other cutters.

⁸*Justice*, February 4, 1921.

The employers' organization in the cloak and suit industry was the next to act. In October, 1921, the Cloak Manufacturers' Protective Association decided to abrogate its agreement with the union, reintroduce piece-work, reduce wages and lengthen hours. In November the unions voted overwhelmingly for a general strike in the industry. Local 10 in a membership meeting gave a unanimous vote for a strike, the cutters responded, strike cards were issued, and members were required to report each day at the cutters' hall and have their cards punched. Public sentiment turned against the association and Morris Hillquit, counsel for the International, invited Samuel Untermeyer to join him in pressing a suit against the association. A temporary injunction was obtained which was made permanent in January, 1922. This was the first time in American industrial history that an injunction was obtained by a trade union against an organization of capitalists and it became a notable incident in labor history. Hillquit declared that "class conscious workers are justly opposed to government by injunction" but "the most promising and effective means of curtailing or abolishing the use of injunctions in labor disputes is to endeavor persistently to turn it against employers." He pointed out that a pro-capitalist organ, the *New York Times*, had

begun to doubt "the efficacy of injunctions in labor disputes."¹⁹

During the strike Local 10 elected its officers, Max Gorenstein, formerly Manager of the cloak department and who, as Vice-President of the International, was stationed in Boston as organizer of Local 49, decided to again run for the office of Manager of Local 10. He sought the endorsement of the Good and Welfare League. When he failed and the league endorsed Dubinsky, he defied the league although it was through its efforts that he had formerly been elected. The division of opinion on the two candidates for manager resulted in a stormy campaign. Gorenstein made several attacks on the league in the *New York Call* which were answered by leaders of the league in the same publication and in the Jewish *Daily Forward*. Harry Berlin and a few dissenters, seeking an opportunity to break the league, supported Gorenstein. Other prominent members, including Israel Lewin, Samuel Perlmutter, Isidore Nagler and Sam B. Shenker, loyally supported the league candidates. Dubinsky defeated Gorenstein and Perlmutter was elected President, both being supported by the league, but dissension followed within the league and a group of dissenters attempted to divide the local into trade divisions, that is, cloaks and dresses.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, December 9, 1921.

Efficient management of strikes had become a task involving considerable routine and executive ability unknown to cutters of the previous decade. This became apparent in the report of the strike in the cloak and suit industry made by General Manager Dubinsky. Machinery had to be created for the registration of cutters, distribution of strike cards, recording roll calls, selection of committees and assigning them to their tasks, arranging for speakers, organizing pickets, instructing them, and distributing them where needed. The report showed that 2,254 cutters had registered of which 1,800 were on strike and 454 were unemployed. Members who were negligent for one reason or another were traced and their conduct was recorded. For example, 47 failed to register, 54 failed to picket, 31 violated general rules, 205 failed to report at shops, 50 visited shops without permission and 18 scabbed. A total of 484 complaints had been made against cutters for alleged violation of strike discipline, some being founded on misinformation, some being confirmed, and some being due to ignorance of rules or unintentional violation of union ethics. Thirty-one cases were based on mere suspicion and 44 complaints proved to be unfounded. A total of 105 members were to be called before the Executive Board.

Then as settlements were made with various

shops working cards had to be issued and the shops themselves had to be investigated to see that union conditions were complied with. Strike benefits had to be paid from week to week and the total amount paid on this account was \$37,390. Eleven mass meetings were held during the strike with an average attendance of 900 cutters at each. Training, efficiency and discipline had made the cutters an effective organized force.¹⁰

In April, 1922, the employers' organization in the cloak trade assumed a warlike mood and in May a conference was held between the unions and the association to consider an agreement to replace the one that expired on June 1. The association insisted on calling in all cloak associations and the independent manufacturers but the union refused to accept them in the conference. Negotiations continued into June and early in July an agreement was reached with the Protective Association that the union standards should continue for two years. Local 10 and five other Locals approved the settlement but as acrimonious attacks were being made by "lefts" in two other Locals the agreement was referred to the members of the Locals for a vote. Of 23,684 votes cast, 92 per cent of the members ratified the agreement. But one vote was cast

¹⁰The complete report appeared in *Justice*, issues of February 10, 17, 24, and March 3, 1922.

against it in Local 10. At the same time it was decided to call a complete stoppage in the industry for a few days in an attempt to wipe out the "corporation" shop. This was to be effected by refusing to settle with a manufacturer unless he employed at least fourteen operators, with certain minor exceptions.

Local 10 participated in this drive against the "corporation" shop. The larger shops complying with the union's position on this question were settled with rapidly. Cutters and other workers in the condemned shops were not permitted to return to them and were distributed wherever possible among the settled shops. It was hoped that quite a number of shops not up to the union standard would enlarge their equipment and no doubt there were some that were brought up to the union requirement. By the end of August, the general stoppage in the industry had come to an end but the war against the "corporation" shop continued with business agents keeping vigil over them. Levine estimated that in the spring of 1924 there were 3,000 cloak, suit, and skirt shops in the city of which 600 were "social shops."¹¹ The "corporation" shop is still a problem in the industry.

Among the constitutional changes made by Local 10 in 1922 was a requirement of applicants for membership to furnish a certificate by

¹¹Levine, *The Women's Garment Workers*, p. 402.

a physician to show that they were free from contagious diseases and conferring honorary membership on those retiring members who had rendered conspicuous service to the union. Instead of one General Manager the Constitution Committee recommended two managers, one for the Cloak, Suit and Raincoat Division and another for the Waist and Dress and Miscellaneous divisions but this was rejected by the members. Another recommendation was to enlarge the membership of the Executive Board from 11 to 15 members, ten to be elected by the membership, two from the Miscellaneous Division appointed by the President with the approval of the members. This was accepted. Dues were increased to 35 cents per week and 25 cents per quarter to be applied to the tuberculosis fund. A rule regarding the period of probation to be served by new members was modified. When the amalgamation of cutters took place in 1906 the constitution declared that "all trade privileges" of new members "shall be denied them" for six months. In 1922 it was declared that such privileges "*may* be denied them" by the Executive Board for this period. The intention was to test the good faith of new members and if union ethics or rules were violated the union reserved the right to cancel the membership. During the period of probation these members have the rights and

privileges of full members except the right to vote in union elections.¹² All trade unions have the problem of getting members to attend meetings, the tendency being to permit officers and a few active members to be responsible for decisions except when some matters of special importance face them. Local 10 had this experience for years but an amendment in 1922 provided that members not attending at least one meeting every three months would be fined \$1. Strict enforcement of this rule rapidly increased the attendance at local meetings and a better informed and more active membership has been the result. In the first year of this rule the local collected over \$2,000 on this account. In later years it has not been strict in enforcing it but it has brought better attendance at local meetings which now number from 800 to a thousand members.

In January, 1923, President Schlesinger of the International, broken in health and discouraged by the factional struggle between "rights" and "lefts," resigned and Local 10 telegraphed Morris Sigman, who had moved to Iowa, urging him to accept a nomination to succeed Schlesinger. Sigman accepted and was elected by the special convention in Baltimore in February.

Important changes in the organization followed the election of Sigman involving amalga-

¹²*Justice*, issues of September 22, 29, October 6, November 3, 1922.

mation of Joint Boards and Locals. Joint Boards were combined with Joint Boards and Locals with Locals and these changes provoked considerable opposition but changing conditions in the industry appeared to make them necessary. In uniting the dressmakers and cloakmakers the opposition contended that the workers in the two trades differed in psychology and that girls in the dress trade maintained a different attitude towards cloakmakers who were fathers and heads of families. Opposition became especially pronounced when the International proceeded to amalgamate Locals 1 and 17. Opponents sided with Locals 11 and 17, declaring that the members had a strong attachment for their respective Locals and that their spiritual reaction to amalgamation should not be disregarded. In this situation Local 10 proved a strong support of the International and it also offered an excellent example. Its members were cutters from all branches of the industry and although its friendly relations with other Locals were strained by its support of amalgamation it continued its support of the latter.*

Due to the amalgamation of the cloak and dress trades in one Joint Board, the two leading sub-branches of the local, the Cloak, Suit, Skirt Raincoat Branch, and the Waist and Dress

*This paragraph is adapted from a suggestion of Mr. Harry Lang.

Branch, were eliminated. This made necessary a number of other changes. The number of members of the Executive Board remained 15 but the method of election was changed. Ten members were nominated by the Cloak and Dress cutters and two by the Miscellaneous Branch, the local electing 12. The President appointed the other three. The Executive Board was also empowered to elect five of its members as delegates to the Joint Board. With the establishment of a tuberculosis fund the provision regarding death benefits was also altered. Members who were admitted on or after January 1, 1922, were not entitled to a death benefit; those who became members for a period not less than 18 months from their obligation and owed not more than 26 weeks' dues were eligible to the tuberculosis fund, while those declared to be suffering from tuberculosis by a competent physician were entitled to \$300 and ceased to be members of the union.¹³

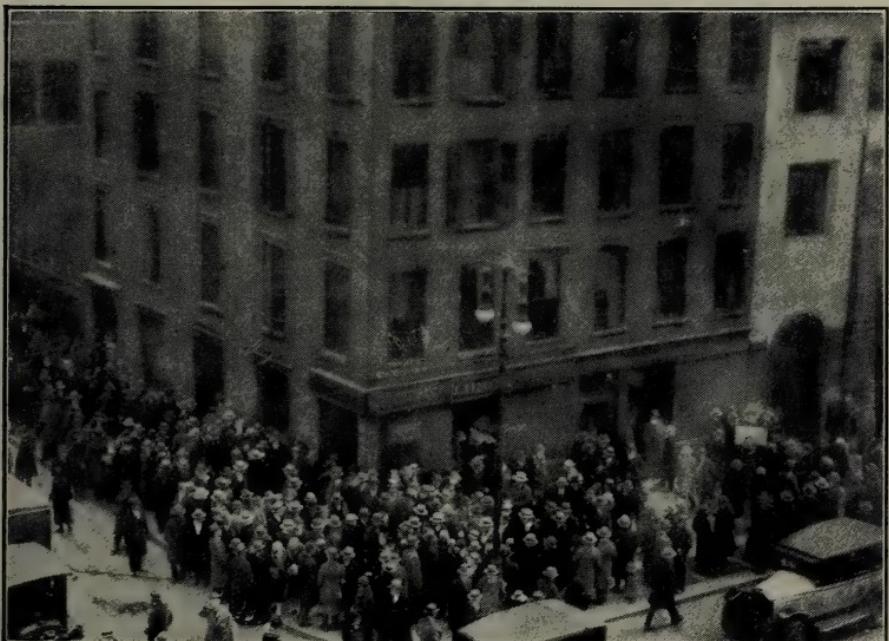
In the year 1924, the members voted to increase the dues from 35 to 50 cents. The year was one of feverish "nuclei" activity accompanied with the resignation of Manager Dubinsky. (See Chapter XIV). An important administrative change was also made when the members voted to consolidate the offices of Manager and Secretary-Treasurer. Joseph Fish had re-

¹³*Justice*, issues of October, 19, 26, and November 2, 1923.

CUTTERS' MARKETS



Corner of Broadway and 12th Street, cutters' market, 1899 to 1912. The building at this corner was formerly an old three-story structure with a shoe store.



Corner of 37th Street and Seventh Avenue, cutters' market since 1922.

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signed the latter position to become Treasurer of the Joint Board and his duties fell to Manager Dubinsky for several months. The temporary arrangement proved satisfactory and the idea arose of making it permanent, not only because of the greater efficiency it brought but because of the financial saving which had been effected by the consolidation of the two offices. The constitution was amended by the members and the consolidation was effected.¹⁴

Local 6 had and Local 10, which succeeded it, has an examination committee of three expert cutters. Each applicant must take an examination as to his qualifications as a skilled cutter. Each man is given a pattern with a cutting ticket and is asked to make a "layer" which he must get within the calculations or estimate. He is judged according to his handling of the pattern and his lay of it. His admission into the union depends on the report of the examination committee. The applicant is then called before a membership committee appointed by the Executive Board. This committee also considers his application. If accepted by the two committees and no objection is made at the local meeting, he takes the following obligation: "I..... do hereby solemnly and sincerely promise on my honor, and of my own free will before these witnesses here assembled, that I will aid in carrying

¹⁴*Ibid.*, issues of October 17, 31, 1924.

out the objects of this union, preserve its secrets, obey its laws and mandates, and all summons of the Executive Board. And I do further promise to be true and just in all my dealings with the members of this union, and make every effort to advance the principles of unionism. To all of which I pledge my sacred honor. All of this I solemnly promise with the full knowledge that to violate this pledge is to stamp me as a man devoid of principle and destitute of honor." The members rise while the obligation is being administered and officers take a similar obligation. This obligation and ceremony have been adhered to for about thirty years through conservative and radical administrations.

This procedure is instrumental in maintaining strict discipline, for the cutter experiences extreme humiliation when he is convicted of violating union rules and breaking his oath. When a member is summoned to appear before the Executive Board he appears before this body as a court of honor, a sort of people's tribunal. If guilty of infraction of some union rule, he is made to feel his disgrace. The Chairman is as grave as a judge and the secretary acts like the clerk of a court while the managers and business agents appear as attorneys. The accused member stands in the center of the room, ashamed if guilty and confident if innocent. The prosecutor reads the indictment and the accused is heard in

his own defense. Occasionally, the prosecutor will become attorney for the accused and plead for a light penalty if he is convinced that the offender is, for some reason, entitled to leniency. One question asked by the judge (the Chairman) or by the prosecutor (local officer) affects the accused most. He is asked, "Do you remember the oath you took to be honest and loyal to your fellow-workers in the trade?" Invariably the answer is in the affirmative and with the promise that he will never again violate his oath.

An interesting "institution" of the New York cutters is the moving cutters' market on Broadway. During the lunch hour cutters have been accustomed to congregate at some corner and employers and head cutters in need of cutters came to know the location where cutters could be found. The interesting thing about the cutters' market is its gradual movement up Broadway. Before the year 1910 the market was located at 12th Street and Broadway and some years later it had moved to 18th Street. By the year 1916 the market had moved on to 25th Street with a remnant left at 18th Street which gradually disappeared. Another change has occurred in recent years. The market has reached 37th Street but has also moved west to Seventh Avenue. A few straggling cutters still gather at the 25th Street market but this market will also soon be only a memory.

Within a twenty-year period Local 10 has had an interesting evolution. It has included more systematic care for the health of members; support of workers' education; consolidation of its official publication with other publications; consolidation of the two leading divisions in one Joint Board and then in the union; two consolidations of important executive and administrative offices which have improved efficiency and effected financial savings; closer cooperation with other workers in the industry; systematic and thorough organization of strikes, and a general strengthening of union morale. Expansion and progress are features of the period.

CHAPTER XIV

COMMUNIST NUCLEI

We now have to consider a phase of the history of Local 10 which in part includes group organization in the local but of a type unlike anything that has ever appeared in the trade union movement. Briefly, this was a program for placing American trade unions in the hands of Communists and to be directed by the Trade Union Educational League, affiliated with the Red Trade Union International in Moscow. As this movement issued out of the Russian Revolution it is necessary to consider the origin and purpose of the Communist nuclei which appeared in Local 10 and other locals in the needle trades unions.

Perhaps the most significant event of the World War was the collapse of the Czarist autocracy in March, 1917, and the revolution that brought workers, peasants and soldiers into control of Russia. The second phase of the revolution came in November when the Bolshevik party seized power. This was regarded abroad merely as a shift of power from one revolution-

ary group to another and a phase of the revolution growing out of differences of opinion such as always appear in every great social upheaval. Not until the end of the World War did it become evident that the Russian Bolsheviks or Communists intended to reconstruct the whole labor movement of the world after the image of their own movement.

The Socialist Party of the United States was the first to be affected. A Communist Left Wing appeared in this organization early in 1919. By September it had developed into two wings at war with each other and in the same month it appeared as three parties warring with each other, the Communist Party, the Communist Labor Party, and the Proletarian Party. These factions had either been expelled from the Socialist Party or had withdrawn from the convention of that party after failing to "capture" it. These factions had committed themselves to civil war as a means of overthrowing modern society but in nationwide raids upon them by government agents in January, 1920, they were driven underground.

In August of this year delegates of Communist fragments and factions from a number of countries met in Moscow and organized themselves as the Communist International. It was at this congress that the Communists decided to take over the Socialist and Labor parties and

the trade unions of all countries. The Communist International was to take over the parties and the Red Labor Union International, organized one month before, was to take over the trade unions. This congress formulated 21 points of a program outlining this purpose which may be summarized as follows: Affiliated organizations must also form illegal organizations and "function actively." Communist members of unions and cooperatives must band together "to steer the organizations toward Communism." The Amsterdam Trade Union International must be blacklisted. There must be iron discipline for all members. All programs must agree with the Communist International. "Reformists," i. e., those who are not Communists, must be "removed from important posts in the labor movement," from "editorial offices, trade unions, parliamentary groups, cooperatives, and municipal administrations, and replace them with well-tried Communists." Within all organizations "it is necessary to organize Communist nuclei" which are obligated to expose "treason." Those who reject this program must be expelled.¹

With the appearance of Communist organizations in the United States also appeared literature propagating these views. All the Communist factions except the Proletarian Party united in the Workers' (Communist) Party in December,

¹*American Labor Year Book, 1921-22, pp. 388-389.*

1921. In the same year the Trade Union Educational League became an annex of this party. The League had been founded by William Z. Foster in 1911 as an Anarcho-Syndicalist group. He had been expelled from the Socialist Party in 1909 and became a member of the I. W. W. The syndicalist organization became the International Trade Union Educational League in 1916 which expired the following year. The word "International" was dropped when it was revived in 1920 and the following year it became the instrument of the Communists for planting "nuclei" in the trade unions. Foster has been an active Communist ever since. His only other activity in these years was a period of brief membership in the A. F. of L. when in 1919 he helped to organize the big strike in the steel industry².

The Russian Revolution was the most significant social upheaval since the French Revolution and that it would have a profound influence on the Labor and Socialist movement was certain but no one could anticipate that one section of the Russian revolutionists would undertake the amazing program of attempting to take control of the trade unions and the labor parties in all countries. In the countries affected by the

²For Foster's biography, see *The American Labor Who's Who*, 1925, p. 77. For the *Trade Union Educational League*, see *American Labor Year Book*, 1923-24, pp. 86-92.

war there were the nervous, emotional and utopian types in the labor movement which were eager to accept all that was proclaimed in Moscow. It is a law of history that great social convulsions like the French and Russian Revolutions invite imitation on the part of human beings in other countries. This law of imitation was especially pronounced among many of those workers in the needle trade unions who had lived in the old Russia. Their emotional intoxication over what had happened in Russia guided their course in the unions. They had not lived through the revolution. They could at least try to imitate many of its manifestations.

The first expression of this law in New York was early in 1919 when a "Workers' Council of the Waist and Dress Industry," was formed in the Ladies' Waist Makers' Union. The name of the group imitated the name of the structural basis of the Russian Government and its members talked of "soviets" and "councils" in the industry. In the previous March this group had issued a stamp printed in red letters as follows:

SOVIET AT WORK IN U. S. A.

10c

Issued by the

WAIST AND DRESS COUNCIL OF
NEW YORK CITY

The organ of the International called attention

to the stamp, saying that "whatever its origin, we warn the public that the stamp is a piece of swindle, pure and simple."³ As an example of the power of imitation, however, this group and its stamp are impressive. The appearance of this group before the Third International had adopted the 21 points showed that there were elements in the unions ready to place the American unions under the orders of Moscow.

As translations of documents of the Communist International and the Red Labor Union International appeared in this country the program of Moscow became clear. Its advocates, like all the utopian sects, believed that the Russian Revolution had revealed the one "plan" for a reorganization of all the nations. All countries were to be reorganized on the soviet model after a civil war waged by the masses had overthrown the old governments. All other questions were to be subordinated to this "plan." In propaganda for this purpose no quarter was to be shown to those who disagreed with it. All opponents were to be branded as "agents of the bourgeoisie." Members and officials of the unions were to be charged with offenses against the union whether true or not in order to obtain power for the Communists. In 1922 The Workers' (Communist) Party printed a translation of a pamphlet by Lenin in which party

³*Justice*, March 22 and May 31, 1919.

members were instructed in this work. They were advised to "practice trickery, to employ cunning, and to resort to illegal methods, to sometimes even overlook or conceal the truth" in order to obtain control of the unions.⁴ The world organization of Communists also assumed the form of a hierarchy. Communist organizations might debate questions for months and members might vote by referendum on certain issues but the executive at Moscow had power to set aside decisions, to reverse them, and to make a minority a majority. It is the most complete bureaucracy that has ever issued out of the labor movement except for Bakunin's "International Brothers" which was organized in the First International.

This brief history is essential to an understanding of the "nucleus" planted in Local 10, its ideas, its policies and its activities. In a "sick" industry, an exotic movement like that we are now considering finds a fertile field. However, Local 10 was a disciplined and stable organization and for that reason was less exposed to control by those subscribing to the above ideas and purposes. In June, 1919, the local was compelled to give attention to the Workers' Council in the waist and dress indus-

⁴Lenin, *Should Communists Participate in Reactionary Trade Unions?* New York. (n.d.). Published by the Workers' (Communist) Party, p. 13.

try and the Executive Board recommended to the members on June 30 that any member of Local 10 who remains affiliated with the council should be expelled. This was approved by a unanimous vote, the few Communists refraining from casting a negative. The council had begun to function as a union by ordering its supporters to defy decisions of the union and its authorized officers and one member was expelled for working in a shop where the workers received instructions from the council. This resolution was proposed by Harry Berlin, then President of Local 10.

Other Communists were either fined or expelled for offenses against union solidarity and these cases counted heavily against their claims to represent a pure and Spartan unionism. In 1919 Local 10 demanded of the firm of M. Altman a compliance with its rule for equal division of work for cutters. The "lefts" took the side of the firm because they were opposed to Local 10's policy. Negotiations with the employer failed, the cutters were called out on strike, the leaders of the shop suspended work for a day, and then went back to work after a verbal understanding with the employer contrary to the rules of the organization. The Executive Board of the Waistmakers' Union, Local 25, then voted to expel the workers of this shop

who were responsible for this course.⁵ Late in 1921 another very active "left" was found working in a struck shop the firm of which he was also a secret member.⁶ Two interesting cases developed in February, 1925. A "left" member of Local 10 was found as a partner in a "corporation" shop which proved to be a "full-fledged scab nest." When confronted with the evidence he admitted his guilt. The other case was a member of Local 21 who had also engaged in a partnership and was working up material received from a scab firm.⁷ In May, 1926, another one was expelled for being in the cloak manufacturing business while a member of the union.⁸

It would be trivial to mention these cases were it not that they show that the claims of the "nuclei" to a puritan unionism were alleged and not real. The complex and disintegrating forces of the industry, especially the temptation to become profit takers rather than to remain with their class and fight its battles, influenced Communists as they did other workers in the industry. A study of the total number of these cases would probably reveal that the Communists contributed as many of these anti-social members in proportion to their numbers as any other groups in the union.

⁵*Justice*, June 14, 1919.

⁶*Ibid.*, December 9, 1921.

⁷*Ibid.*, February 13, 1925.

⁸*Ibid.*, May 14, 1926.

One case is especially revolting not only because of its gross betrayal of the best ethics of unionism but because the "nuclei" in Local 10 made his actions their own by attempting to relieve him of the penalty imposed by the members. In August, 1923, the International had ordered all group organizations in the unions to disband and all such organizations except the various "nuclei" complied with the ruling. Two years later a member of Local 10 who had certain grievances against the officers was charged with issuing a leaflet slandering the local officers. He was not a Communist but admitted to the Executive Board that he was responsible for the document. He had charged the officers with being "stool pigeons" for carrying out the rule of preventing work on Sundays. The offending member had himself been responsible for fines imposed on three members who had violated the rule in the shop where he worked. In the circular he denounced the enforcement of this very rule. Having admitted his responsibility for the leaflet this member was fined \$75 and placed on probation for two years. The Communists immediately made his actions their own by attempting to solicit funds to pay the fine. To permit this proffered aid to be given without challenge would have been to permit a few members of the union to veto penalties assessed by the union and thus render union laws and

decisions ineffective and absurd. The Executive Board warned members that it would not tolerate this attempt to nullify union decisions and make the union itself ridiculous.⁹

By the end of the year 1922 the factional war between the Communists and the Socialist Party had spent itself and in the following year the Communists gave more and more attention to the trade unions. A movement that sincerely desired to make the trade unions more progressive would have given its attention to the conservative unions of the country with the view of bringing them up to the advanced position occupied by the organizations in the needle trades. The Communists, however, gave most of their attention to the advanced unions. Men with whom they had been associated for many years and who had given devoted service in building unions in the most difficult industry of the country were all lumped together as " betrayers" and " tools of the bosses." Union members and officials were divided into two classes. In one class were the Communist perfectionists; in the other were all others without distinction. For those who could accept this classification the Lenin code of conduct was logical.

Moreover, there is always a basis for dissatisfaction in all organizations of the workers. Whatever conquests may be made by the union

⁹The case is reported in detail in *Justice*, January 16, 1925.

they never reach the ideal. There are always new problems to face and new conquests to be made, especially in the ladies' garment industry, with its freaks of fashion, seasonal production, uncertain employment and survival of small shop production. Workers who do not understand the economies of the industry are likely to accept the promises of greater conquests offered by an aggressive and well-organized group. The fact that the ideal had not been reached is a reason for some to accept the promise of it. Then official responsibility in the unions carries with it many possibilities of misjudging a situation, of making mistakes, of striving for something and realizing only part of it, thus leaving officials open to criticism. The organized group may have a better program but its advocates are not tested with responsibility. Vested with no official power, they cannot be charged with organization mistakes. With seasonal production, unemployment, or uncertain production, the insurgent group is likely to obtain a following among those who do not share the fundamental views of the group.

This happened in a number of the unions in the International. In October, 1923, the International began to carry its decision against group organizations into effect by removing 19 members from the Executive Board of Local 22, accompanying its action with the publication of

documents showing that the "nucleus" of that local was meeting in the headquarters of the Workers' (Communist) Party. Local 1 received a similar order which was carried out but Local 9 refused and the International contemplated its reorganization. Active partisans of the various "nuclei" objected whereupon the editor of *Justice* quoted from Kalinin, President of the All-Russian Soviet Federation, to show that the same action was being taken in Russia against organized groups in the Communist Party. While this dissention was accumulating in other Locals, Local 10 reported a "leagueless election" in December.¹⁰ It was a stable organization while other unions were shaken with the strife. By 1925 conditions became so bad that in June the Joint Board removed Communists from the Executive Boards of Locals 2, 9 and 22. The first two Locals were taken over by the Joint Board and the local treasuries were attached by the International. Local 10 supported the disciplinary measures but not until September was a peace agreement reached.¹¹

In the presence of this compound of charges and counter-charges, wild hysteria and war of broadsides, Local 10 maintained discipline in spite of intense provocation on the part of its small "nuclei." When the storm was at its height

¹⁰*Justice*, October 12, 19 and December 21, 1923.

¹¹*Ibid.*, June 19, July 17, 31, August 7, 14, 21 and October 2, 1925.

and a number of other Locals had fallen into the hands of the Trade Union Educational League the "nuclei," who obtained the cooperation of the newly-formed Joint Action Committee composed of the suspended Executive Board members of Locals 2, 9 and 22, showered leaflet after leaflet upon the members in the hope of carrying the members into the torrent that led direct to Mr. Foster's league. The leaflets were all of a common type. They were intended to break down the confidence of the members in the elected officials, mobilize a majority behind "nuclei" candidates, obtain control of the union and with this power shape the policies of the union in accord with the program of the Trade Union Educational League to which all "nuclei" members were pledged. If the program was of a type hitherto unknown to trade unions the same was true of the "literature" issued by the "nuclei." One who studies the collection of broadsides to be found in the archives of Local 10 finds it difficult to maintain an objective attitude while weaving this material into an historical narrative. To describe it would subject the writer to the charge of exaggeration. To avoid this the only alternative is to quote from the material and permit the reader to draw his own conclusions.

To meet this crusade and cope with it intelligently men of discreet judgment but who could

also be firm in carrying out the rules and decisions of the union were necessary. In the period when the Welfare League was winning support for its policies David Dubinsky was elected President in December, 1920. In the following year he was elected General Manager and has held this position each year since 1922. Associated with him were other men of experience including S. Perlmutter, I. Nagler, Sam B. Shenker and others on the Executive Board and in other responsible positions. These men were not all "new comers." Some were "old timers" and conservatives like John W. Settle, Charles Serrington and others, but they were men of experience and integrity and the Welfare League supported them. This action in supporting these "old timers" won the confidence and respect of members in general as it was evidence that the radicals and Socialists were prompted in their policies by a desire to improve the welfare of the members in general.

In 1924 when the International was involved in the quarrel with a number of Locals dominated by "nuclei" and when the "nucleus" in Local 10 was very active, Dubinsky presented his resignation as General Manager. This occurred in August. The Boston convention of the International had voted an increase of five cents per capita on the members and this rate became due on August 15. A strike was also

likely in the cloak and suit industry and the Joint Board contemplated an assessment. The Executive Board of Local 10 recommended instead of a twenty-dollar assessment, an increase of dues to fifty cents per week. This was defeated by a decided majority, due to the efforts of the "lefts." It is easy to persuade members not to pay increased taxes or dues. Of course, the five-cents increase in per capita stood as it was a convention decision. Dubinsky regarded this action as an expression of lack of confidence and believed it his duty to present his resignation. The Executive Board declined to accept it and the members at a special meeting attended by at least 1,200 by a practically unanimous vote rejected the resignation and reversed their action on the fifty cents dues. A few "nuclei" members and their supporters urged the acceptance of Dubinsky's resignation which provoked a general criticism of their attacks. After the members refused to accept the resignation, which was a vote of confidence, Dubinsky withdrew it.¹²

In the following December the "nuclei" decided that as Communists had been successful in a number of New York Locals they would contest the election with a candidate against Dubinsky. The latter had one faculty that was essential when fanaticism ran rampant. He remained

¹²*Justice*, August 22 and 29, 1924.

cool and collected under the most provoking situations. His policy was to invite members of the "nuclei" to say what they wished to say and then answer wild assertions by quoting records that no one could dispute. In accord with this policy, at one meeting in December, 1924, before the election of officials, all business was postponed and the meeting was thrown open to a general discussion. Certain "nuclei" members had asked Secretary Baroff of the International for permission to print circulars regarding the local election. The International had prohibited this group action in August, 1923, and the request was denied. The Executive Board of Local 10 then assigned the local meeting of December 8 to a general discussion of any matters that members desired to consider. A few members of the "nuclei" frankly criticised the administration but refrained from making the grave charges usually made in their unsigned circulars. Dubinsky, in answer to statements that union conditions were bad, turned to the records, saying that if wages were raised to \$90 a week "these men would not be satisfied." Data were then quoted from the working cards of six active opponents to show that each had received increases in wages since 1921 that varied from \$5 to \$10 per week. Other information regarding improved conditions was presented and this assembling of facts left no opportunity for a

rejoinder.¹³ Dubinsky was re-elected by the highest vote received by any candidate. He received 1,330 votes and his opponent, Jacob Lukin, 419.

In April, 1925, the suspension of the Communists by the Joint Board occurred and attention was then turned by them to the bitter struggle that followed. In the same month, when Manager Dubinsky visited his relatives in Poland, Isadore Nagler was appointed by the Executive Board to take charge of the office of Manager. In Europe Dubinsky found the same struggles in the unions and upon his return home late in June the civil war in New York Locals was at its height. On June 29 the members of Local 10 met in a large meeting to act upon the suspensions voted by the Joint Board. It was the crucial question for the local in this year and the vote was certain to muster the full strength of the "nuclei." It was known that members of the Locals affected by the suspensions were being urged not to recognize the business agents of the Joint Board, not to pay dues, etc. The union claimed that high officials of the Communist Party were on the ground advising and directing their supporters in the struggle. It is not the writer's purpose to inquire whether the course taken by the Joint Board and the International was wise or just under the circumstances. Those

¹³*Ibid.*, December 12, 1924.

who objected were reminded that the Workers' (Communist) Party was maintaining a rigid discipline of its members and insisting on respect for *its* decisions. In the previous January this party had expelled five members in Chicago, censured two, suspended one for three months and two for six months. Their offense was not one against the party's declared principles but because they did not follow instructions in an election of officials in the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of Chicago.¹⁴ With a political party thrust into the heart of a trade union, directing its own members and holding the threat of expulsion over their heads if they observe union rules rather than party orders, division and conflict are inevitable. When to this is added savage attacks a union is fortunate if it survives.

A war of broadsides or manifestos had also raged for ten days before the members of Local 10 gathered to vote on the momentous issue before them. The "nuclei" of Local 10 had distributed a vindictive circular and to this was added a broadside by the Joint Committee of Action, Locals 2, 9 and 22, printed in English and Yiddish. Twenty members of an Anarchist Workers' Group in the Cloak and Dressmakers' Union issued a still longer manifesto which, however, was written in moderate language in-

¹⁴The expulsions were reported in *The Daily Worker*, January 23, 1925.

tended to appeal to reason rather than hysteria. Much space in *Justice* was also taken up in a discussion of the questions involved in the factional war. The Yiddish Communist organ was also carrying a daily broadside and the Jewish *Daily Forward* was presenting the position of the union.

At the meeting on June 29 every inch of space in Arlington Hall was filled with expectant members and for the first time the fundamental questions involved in the struggle were presented. Of the thousand or more members at the meeting only 32 voted against the suspensions. Thus ended one of the most dramatic meetings in the history of Local 10. The remarkable majority voting in favor of union discipline and solidarity in a period when passions ran wild was a tribute to the stability of the union.¹⁵ The reports of critical meetings in this period, written by Sam B. Shenker, also show an absence of the rancor and uncritical distortion of issues which characterized many partisans.

In the meantime the members of the local unions had been awaiting a report of the Governor's Commission but that body offered only a few recommendations, declared that it must have more time to study the industry before making a final report, and recommended renewal of the agreement in the cloak industry for a

¹⁵*Justice*, July 3, 1925.

year. This was disappointing to the members as well as officials of the Joint Board. The latter decided, however, to recommend renewal of the agreement but the membership were to have the final word in a referendum vote. The vote closed on July 18 which resulted in 10,337 members voting in the affirmative and 3,781 against.

While the referendum was pending a revolting circular was issued by the "nuclei" of Local 10. Reference of the question to a vote of the members who were to be affected by the decision certainly complied with an elementary principle of democracy but in an appeal to the members of Local 10 the "nuclei" declared: "*Refuse to participate in the FAKE REFERENDUM of the officials.* First they sell us out to the commissions of bankers and lawyers. Then they expell the representatives of the rank and file in order to force the Commission report on us." The circular proceeded to argue that Local 10 was mastered by a handful of officials and that the members only acquiesced in their domination because of fear. "How long will you allow the fat-bellied clique of job holders to terrorize you?" reads one sentence. "We know that you despise and curse the black reactionary machine at the head of your union," reads another. "How long will you sit at union meetings, dumb, quaking with fear and afraid to voice your true sentiments?" the members were asked. "Brother

cutters, do you know that Dubinsky uses thousands of your hard-earned dollars to pay gangsters to beat and cripple the girls of Local 22 on the picket line! Will you allow this?"¹⁶

The author has no desire to comment on these statements or the language used but it is necessary to quote them as they represent a phase of the history of Local 10. One can only regret that the circular was written and was distributed by members who believed that it would assist them in acquiring leadership in the union. Dubinsky read the circular in a membership meeting on July 27, asked whether any member believed it, and whether any member would admit its authorship to which there was no response. Simultaneously with the appearance of the circular the International reproduced photographic facsimiles of letters sent out from the headquarters of the Trade Union Educational League and the Workers' (Communist) Party calling meetings of members of various "nuclei" in the unions. "We are going to take a roll call," read one communication, "and those that fail to answer this time surely cannot be considered a rebel and certainly not a Communist. We expect you on time."¹⁷ Insufferable arrogance could not go further than this yet William Z. Foster, at a meeting of "nuclei" members on

¹⁶Italics and capitals in the original.

¹⁷The documents appear in *Justice*, July 31, 1925.

July 27 declared that the Central Executive Committee of the Workers' (Communist) Party, located in Chicago, had decided to call a strike of the cloakmakers in New York City! Dual unionism, which Foster and his associates claimed to oppose, had issued out of their interference in the unions. They explained their course on the ground that their Executive Boards were suspended but they still acted as a union.

The ranks of the cutters, excepting about thirty members of the "nuclei," were not broken by this attempt to take over the functions of the unions. *Justice* estimates that about one-sixth of the workers in the cloak and dress industry left the shops in response to the call for a "stoppage" while the Joint Action leaders claimed about 50 per cent. The Joint Board had considerable difficulty in obtaining the reinstatement of many members who had lost their jobs for responding to the unauthorized "strike." Many employers took advantage of the situation to discharge active union men. This caused trouble for the union and the opposition leaders who merely added more chaos to the strife. As a Communist slogan was "Hands off Russia," in Local 10 this was answered with "Hands off the Union."

Conditions became so bad in July that Israel Feinberg, General Manager of the Joint Board,

and Meyer Perlstein, Manager of the Protective Division, resigned and the management of the Joint Board was taken over by Morris Sigman, International President. Sigman urged the Executive Board of Local 10 to temporarily release Dubinsky so that the latter could aid him in the trying work of combatting Communist destruction and to save the Locals from complete demoralization. Dubinsky was released on condition that he should devote part of his time to Local 10. The "nuclei" of the local became more reckless in their irresponsible statements and with the approval of a membership meeting on August 1 three Communists were deprived of the right to attend meetings for one year. The peace plan formulated early in September was considered at a meeting of shop chairmen of Locals affiliated with the Joint Board which was largely attended despite Communist appeals to boycott it and peace terms were ratified at a later meeting by the shop chairmen and the members of Locals 2, 9 and 22. Dubinsky presided at both these meetings. The terms included the calling of a special convention of the International in Philadelphia on November 30.¹⁸

In this same month, September, (prior to the peace) nine Communist members of Local 10 decided to challenge the decision of the Inter-

¹⁸The peace plan as formulated and the plan adopted may be consulted in *Justice*, August 14 and October 2, 1925.

national against organization of groups and organized a "Cutters' Council" which had met at 5 West 21st Street. The "Council," according to officials of Local 10, issued instructions to cutters to ignore the business office of Local 10, to defy decisions of the local, to apply at the "Council" office for jobs and file complaints with the "Council" before filing them with the local. Obviously this was an attempt at dual unionism. The Executive Board recommended the suspension of the nine members for two years but that the sentence should be suspended during good behavior which was approved by the members.¹⁹ Due to the peace feeling that prevailed for a short time, Local 10 did not enforce this decision. The "nuclei" members had by this time made themselves so obnoxious that they had lost the respect of the members and it was difficult for a known member of the "nuclei" to get a hearing. The officers of the union whom the Communists so bitterly attacked had to plead for the right of the offending members to be heard at local meetings.

Local 10 ratified the peace agreement by a vote of four to one and in October there appeared to be a spirit of accommodation on the part of the "nuclei" members. The peace agreement which had brought some semblance of order in the Joint Board and the disturbed Locals

¹⁹*Justice*, September 18, 1925.

affiliated with it contained a clause providing for an appeal to the General Executive Board of the International "on behalf of the suspended executives and officers" and at the meeting of Local 10 on October 12, 1925, Manager Dubinsky suggested that this clause should also apply to members who had been disciplined by the Executive Board of Local 10 and this was adopted by the members after a leading supporter of the "nuclei" had suggested a new era in the union by walking forward and shaking the hand of Dubinsky.

Before the month closed another question confronted the membership, proportional representation in the Joint Board, which provoked considerable debate in each meeting until the special convention met in Philadelphia. This question had come up at the Cleveland convention of the International in 1922 but due to the division of opinion there at the suggestion of President Schlesinger the matter was referred to the General Executive Board for study. Those who favored proportional representation contended that the large Locals were placed in a minority position while those who opposed it answered that proportional representation would place the small Locals under the dominion of the large ones. The second clause of the peace program agreed that the method of representation at conventions and in the joint boards "is

causing dissatisfaction," that the special convention should come to some decision on it, and refer it to a general vote of the membership, including the submission of "both majority and minority viewpoints."

The cutters' shop chairmen in the cloak and dress trades drew up a resolution on this issue for presentation to the convention. After reciting some early history of the organized cutters in New York the resolution declared that the cutters were "vigorously opposed to any program that will permit Locals having larger membership to dominate and control the destinies of our local." The final section declared in favor of "the election of officers, including business agents, by the membership of Local 10, which, after all, is best fitted to choose its own representatives, and not to submit to accepting officers imposed upon us by other Locals by virtue of general elections, which means giving the power to other Locals, in view of their greater numbers, (membership?) to select officers for Local 10."²⁰

Another question hovered in the background of this issue and every informed member was aware of it. In fact, it emerged from the obscurity in which it reposed at the next meeting of the local on October 24 where it was frankly debated. Should the local's business agents on the

²⁰*Justice*, October 23, 1925.

Joint Board be elected by the members of the local or in a general election conducted by the Joint Board? If the latter course were followed it was certain that the other Locals, influenced by Communist domination, would select members of the "nuclei" of Local 10. Not one of these members would be chosen by the cutters themselves in a local election. Should the cutters, therefore, approve a system of choosing business agents which would impose on them officials who did not have the confidence of the membership? Business agents were required to file their applications with the Joint Board but those serving Local 10 did not file as the local had not been given an opportunity to decide between general and local elections. It was pointed out that one "nuclei" candidate for business agent had received only 84 votes out of over 1,200 cast for candidates in the election for delegates to the special convention. In a general election for business agents this member, whose small vote received in a local election showed that he did not have the confidence of cutters, would be imposed on them against their will. Dubinsky declared that the Joint Board had insisted on "getting at least two business agents out of five from their own crowd in Local 10" although "the individuals whom the leaders in the Joint Board have in mind have no standing with the membership of Local 10." Dubinsky

and Perlmutter defended the right to local elections and four Communists opposed it on the ground that the cutters' business agents were to represent all the crafts in the shop notwithstanding that such agents represented Local 10's quota. However, local elections was approved by the members by a vote of five to one.²¹

A few days later the "nuclei" distributed another unsigned circular which showed that the promised era of good feeling a few weeks before was merely a gesture. Under the caption of "Progressive Cutters' Bulletin" and bearing date of November 4, 1925 the circular declared that "as far as business agents are concerned," Local 10 is already separated from the Joint Board." Dubinsky was charged with trying "to pervert democracy to save his and his boys' selfish interests." Reference is made to "sluggers and gangsters" followed by the question in bold type, "Is Dubinsky their leader?" All are said to be banded together "to work underhandedly with the bosses' associations, with the police, and the underworld, to make the next general strike a failure, and then to blame the new leadership for it."

One statement was correct. Local 10 remained without business agents but it had also avoided having imposed upon it business agents which the local membership would never choose.

²¹*Ibid.*, October 30, 1925.

A number of "nuclei" partisans had filed applications as business agents with the Joint Board but only one was placed on the ballot and he withdrew. Meantime the Executive Board adopted the resolutions of the shop chairmen favoring local elections. The board requested the previous staff of business agents to serve and the Joint Board, facing the resistance of Local 10 to general elections, cast a tie vote on the question. Three weeks passed and Local 10 had no official business agents but a majority of the Locals affiliated with the Joint Board approved the position of Local 10 and the latter eventually won its point.

Meantime a declaration by Dubinsky on November 9 that he would not accept another nomination brought another flood of leaflets from the "nuclei" and stories in the Yiddish Communist daily which declared that Dubinsky was being forced out of office by an indignant membership. He read this literature to the members at the meeting on November 23, accepted the challenge and was elected by a vote of 1,106 to 242 for his opponent in December.²²

When Dubinsky's resignation became known the "nuclei" members, who designated themselves "Progressive Cutters of Local 10, I. L. G. W. U." issued an undated leaflet for distribution among the members which bore the caption,

²²*Justice*, issues for October and December, 1925.

"Why Is Dubinsky Resigning?" Its character and contents are expressive of the psychology of those who accepted the leadership and instructions of the Trade Union Educational League. The following excerpts indicate the general trend of the leaflet:

"Dubinsky is resigning because the old game of bluffing is up, because the workers in all the other crafts—the pressers, the operators, the finishers, the dressmakers—are behind the new leadership. The old stuff will no longer do. The old game of inciting cutters against operators, Italians against Jews, of making secret horse deals with the bosses, of fixing union elections, of expelling and suspending opponents, of taking them off the jobs, of using gangsters against the membership, of putting over all sorts of fakes on the membership, and covering them up with the aid of the Joint Board and the G. E. B.—all these practices are becoming things of the past. . . . Should Dubinsky try to withdraw his resignation or turn it into another bluff, resign he must. . . . The old leadership in their desperate efforts to hold on to their jobs keep our unions in a continual state of civil war. . . . With the exception of a few favorites and boot-lickers who are favored by the machine with the good jobs, we cutters suffer just as much as our fellow workers of the other crafts. . . . Why, then, should we cutters support the old, corrupt lead-

Progressive Cutters Bulletin

VOL. I NOVEMBER 13, 1925 No. 5

DUBINSKY'S BLUFF EXPOSED

BROTHER CUTTERS!

For many weeks the rank and file have been engaged in a terrific struggle against Dubinsky. For weeks the membership has been fighting against Dubinsky's attempt to split our organization and his sabotage against the New York Joint Board. Dubinsky stands so clearly exposed before the membership, that the large majority of our union has refused to sustain his splitting policy.

TRIES TO SCARE THE MEMBERS

Now Dubinsky has decided to change his tactics. He thinks he can frighten the membership with a threat of resignation. But we all know this resignation is a fake. Already Dubinsky's boys are busy gathering signatures begging him to return. But these tricks will deceive no one. We have seen them before and we say emphatically WE ARE THROUGH WITH DUBINSKY.

We are through with his splitting tactics. We are through with his tricks. We are through with his threats. We want no more of his *Don't Worry Club*. We are determined to build up our organization WITHOUT DUBINSKY. We will make of Cutters Local 10, the most loyal and the most active local in the International.

DOWN WITH DUBINSKY **ORGANIZE TO OUST DUBINSKY'**

Watch for Further Cartoons.

Progressive Cutters of Local 10, I. L. G. W. U.

A COMMUNIST CIRCULAR

ership of our local headed by Dubinsky & Co.?"

This vehemence and venom defeated their object. Crimes were charged against local officials which, if supported by evidence, would warrant the expulsion of the offenders in disgrace. Neither in this or any other period did the authors of these broadsides attempt to prefer charges against any officer of the local or claim to have any specific evidence to support their charges of criminal misuse of trust or power although often asked to do so. If a scoundrel is in office in any organization it is the duty of those who have evidence of his guilt to present it. If they have such evidence and do not bring it to light they become the accomplices of those in power. For these reasons the broadsides of the "nuclei" were absurd and certainly no one would claim that they were honest.

The election did not conclude, however, without some extraordinary incidents a few weeks before the members voted. One by the name of Bert Miller, not a cutter or a member of Local 10, called a meeting of cutter members of the Trade Union Educational League for November 18 to make preparations for a meeting of cutters in Webster Hall. Considering the small following of the "nuclei" in Local 10 it is not likely that the 600 the "nuclei" claimed attended this meeting were members of Local 10. Some dramatic "affair" appears to have been planned

for the Webster Hall meeting to influence the cutters to vote for the "nuclei" candidates in the local election. The cutters' department in *Justice* declares that it was planned to have one man bandaged and carried into the hall on a stretcher as "evidence" that "Dubinsky's gangsters" had beaten him up!* At any rate, immediately following the Webster Hall meeting the "nuclei" distributed the most venomous leaflet that had yet appeared, declaring that the "gangsters" had invaded the hall, "pulling out knives, picking up chairs, slamming and cutting up the cutters assembled." A resolution adopted at the meeting declared that "Dubinsky and his gangsters" had made "the union a gold mine for themselves," that they followed "splitting tactics," and that Dubinsky should resign.²³

This was the most disgusting episode of the career of the "nuclei" in Local 10. It can only

*About 100 loyal members of Local 10 attended this meeting with the approval of the officers. When the meeting started, the officers of Local 10 and active members marched into the meeting, calling upon the loyal members to desert it as it was in opposition to the regular meetings of Local 10. The loyal members rose to leave the meeting, the Communists tried to provoke a fight and stabbed two officers of Local 10. This incited those present and a meeting was immediately held at the headquarters of Local 10, where the members spontaneously pledged a fight to the finish against the Communists and their methods.

²³Nearly an entire page of *Justice*, December 18, 1925, is taken up with a discussion of this affair. A photograph of the typewritten call for the Webster Hall meeting and signed by Bert Miller also appears in this issue.

be explained by recalling the low cunning which Lenin urged all Communists to observe as members of trade unions and other organizations. The conduct provides an interesting study in psychology as it does not appear that men of normal minds, however sincere they might be, could more deliberately choose a course to defeat their own ends than the course chosen by the "nuclei" in all their activities in Local 10.

CHAPTER XV

THE SPECIAL CONVENTION OF 1925

Following the internal struggle in the International when the three Locals were suspended, an episode in which Local 10 had played a dominant role, solidarity between these Locals and the International was lacking. Local 35 resented the amalgamation of Locals 1 and 17 effected by the International the previous year which was supported by Local 10. It was known that Locals 10, 17, 35 and 48 worked harmoniously within the Joint Board and the International and generally supported the same policies within the union. When the International decided to merge Locals 1, 11 and 17, Dubinsky, as Vice-President of the International, supported the amalgamation. Jacob Heller, Vice-President of the International and Secretary of Local 17, appealed to the Executive Board of Local 10 to support Local 17 in its request to postpone enforcement of the merger. The executive of Local 10, in answer to this request, addressed a letter to Heller on October 24, 1924, which reads:

In response to your appearance before the Executive Board of Local 10, respecting your appeal for support to secure postponement of the General Executive Board's action in the matter of Locals 1, 11 and 17, I regret to state that the Executive Board's views do not coincide with yours in this matter.

This decision was not hastily reached. The case of Local 17, which was presented by you in so able and clear a manner, I am sure, impressed the Executive Board greatly. The Executive Board was also cognizant of the feeling of friendship which existed between Locals 10 and 17, and of its feelings towards you, personally, because of your contribution to the building up of and your devotion to your local.

It was mainly for this reason that the Executive Board deliberated long and carefully before rendering its decision. Account was also taken of the unity of action between our respective locals in matters affecting the Joint Board and the International. However, in the course of the account taken of all this, the Executive Board, I am directed to inform you, could not lose sight, as an integral and loyal part of the International, of the aggravated jurisdictional disputes between operators' Locals 1, 11 and 17.

The Executive Board felt that the maintenance of three locals composed of memberships of one craft in one city was unnecessary, impractical and inefficient. This opinion on the part of the Board is largely the result of the fact that Local 10, itself, is composed of a membership engaged in but one craft, having jurisdiction of all cutters—cloaks, dresses, waists, children's dresses, and so on. Hence, for the Executive Board to have taken any other stand in the matter of a different craft would have been a contradiction of Local 10's very existence. And as you are undoubtedly aware of the old tradition of Local 10—its loyalty and faithfulness toward the International, surely you can realize that on an

occasion of this sort we could not repudiate our past, regardless of our personal feelings toward you or your local.

No matter how displeasing our decision may be, and though it may be in contradiction to your views, the Executive Board wishes to assure you that only strict trade union convictions and the realization that it will serve the best interests of the organization were the reasons that prompted the Executive Board to take the action above mentioned.

Although considered loyal to the International Local 35 displayed no fighting spirit against the "lefts" and did not cooperate with it, leaving Locals 10, 23 and 48 the only loyal unions during the struggle. The "lefts" and Communists, therefore, appeared to have the upper hand. A few weeks of fighting left both sides exhausted, although another week or two would probably have given the International the advantage.

But at this stage of the struggle Local 35 proposed peace with the view of compromising with the Communists because of the amalgamation. To save the union and check the peace offer of Local 35, the International made peace with the Communists. But in the few months of Communist power before the convention the Communists convinced even the most hopeful that co-operation with them was impossible. They sought to impose their party decisions and policies on the union members, regardless of the welfare of the union and the industry.

It was these events and the background sketched in the preceding chapter that led to the calling of the special convention of the International to meet in Philadelphia on November 30.

Local 10 elected as its delegates David Dubinsky, Samuel Perlmutter, Isadore Nagler, Sam B. Shenker, Philip Ansel, Max Stoller, Henry Robbin, Louis Forer and Maurice W. Jacobs. There was an attitude of apprehension on all sides, a fear that the war between "lefts" and "rights" in New York might lead to the disruption of the International.

The General Executive Board presented an extremely long report which was pessimistic in tone. It declared that "the past year and a half in the life of our organization has been one of the most difficult periods in its history. Not only has it been heavily afflicted by the curse of internal warfare, but our workers have had to pass through unprecedented unemployment which has caused them untold sufferings and has multiplied the union's burden. We battled persistently for the establishment in our industry of a number of important industrial reforms, which in the concensus of the opinion of our members, would have ameliorated materially the condition of the workers in our main trades, but as yet these reforms, with the exception of two major achievements, have not materialized." The

longest section of the report was given to a presentation of the internal warfare in New York, accompanied with documents related to the controversy and numerous quotations from Communist publications intended to show that Communist organizations were chiefly responsible for the factional struggles.

At Philadelphia chief interest centred on the composition of the convention. Some of the leading Communists were on hand with many partisans who organized demonstrations in the hall as the convention opened and during its proceedings. Nobody knew for certain what the strength of the respective forces was until the Credentials Committee reported and this report was looked forward to with intense interest. Local 10 was well represented on the convention committees. Dubinsky was Chairman of the important Resolutions Committee and Nagler was Secretary of the equally important Credentials Committee. Other assignments of Local 10 delegates were Ansel on Officers' Reports; Perlmutter on Organization; Shenker on Law; Robbins on Rules and Regulations; Jacobs on Appeal, and Stoller on Trade and Local Jurisdiction and Adjustment.

The Credentials Committee had heard objections to the seating of certain delegates and listened to charges made against Locals 2, 9, 22, 23, 48 and 62. Objections and charges on the one

hand and answers on the other were recognized as preliminary skirmishes to the battle in the convention. The committee recommended seating of 285 delegates and added that it had no power to pass on charges against Locals which should go to the Appeal Committee. Louis Hyman for the "lefts" declared as for Locals 9, 2 and 22 "We do not recognize any Appeal Committee," that no "artificial majority is going to rule this convention." This precipitated a lengthy debate and not until the evening of the third day did the report reach a vote. Dubinsky declared that the "lefts" had canvassed every "artificial delegate" that could be approached, had made them promises, had tried to intimidate them, and when they had failed to win these delegates the "lefts" charged them with being "artificial." The delegates in dispute represented Locals against whom the "lefts" had made charges, three in all. The "rights" had countered by objecting to the delegates of three "left" Locals. Nagler, in a very effective speech summed up for the Credential Committee. "Some statements have been made," he declared, "about an artificial delegation.... May I ask you, Brother Portnoy, about the delegation of Local 45, the designers' local, a 'militant' organization—are they artificial or are they not?" He charged that the local had issued receipts to members for five months instead of stamping membership books and added, "we

did not recommend unseating of these delegates, although we had good ground for doing so." The report was accepted by a vote of 158 to 107 and this vote roughly showed the division in the convention.¹

Local 10 introduced eight resolutions not one of which was of a factional character. One favored the establishment of the 40-hour week generally in the industry; the second provided that in future agreements "the minimum scale of cutters shall not be lower than that of other crafts;" the third was an amendment to the constitution to avoid having conventions continue longer than one week; the fourth, urged amendment of the constitution in the matter of the election of an Objection Committee; the fifth, amending the clause on Trials and Appeals; the sixth, another amendment of the same clause; the seventh, amending the section on Amendments, and the eighth, to change the article on Joint Boards and District Councils in relation to dues and assessments.

The convention proceeded with its work in an atmosphere of tense feeling, much of its time being wasted by demonstrations of the "lefts" and by the cheering of claquers packed in the gallery. It was the first national convention of a trade union to meet in this country where parti-

¹*Report and Proceedings of the Eighteenth Convention of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, 1925, pp. 13-35.*

sans of a political movement flocked into the hall and endeavored to influence decisions of the delegates. Because of the long debates, frequent interruptions and demonstrations, the convention was in session 18 days. It is doubtful whether any other trade union convention in this country has ever equalled this record. The main issues that brought a strict division in the vote of the delegates were the so-called question of "amnesty" for "political offenses" in the union; the proposed program of the "lefts" for the problems of the industry; the report of the General Executive Board on the internal quarrel; proportional representation in Joint Boards, and the election of officers of the International.

The substance of the "amnesty" issue was the contention of the anti-administration forces that the expulsion from office of union officials in New York was prompted by political reasons. Most of these officials were Communists and, it was charged, they were punished because of their political views. This "policy of expulsions" should cease. Governments all over the world had granted amnesty for all political offenses. Why should not the International follow their example? Delegate Portnoy declared that the principle of amnesty especially applied to delegates to the convention. This body was "the highest tribunal of our International and if a man is guilty of a certain political crime, if

MEMBERS PAYING DUES AT FINANCE DEPARTMENT





his members have chosen him to represent them," he should be seated unless he scabbed or was guilty of a crime for personal profit. Delegate Ninfo answered that opinions were one thing, slander another, and that it was the campaign of reckless slander that was objectionable. Nagler of Local 10 added that punishment for defiance of union rules and decisions was not persecution of political opinions.²

The question had been raised on the seating of Luigi Rea of Local 38, who was finally seated, but it came up on two more occasions, once on resolutions to release political prisoners held by governments and again on the report of the General Executive Board in relation to the suspension of union officials in New York. The resolution named the countries in which these prisoners were held, including Russia and the United States. The "lefts" fought to strike out Russia, contending that no prisoners were jailed in that country except Czarists and counter-revolutionists. The report of the British Trade Union delegation to Russia was quoted to support this view. Delegate Hochman retorted by reading extensively from a recent book (*Letters From Russian Prisons*, New York, 1925) containing letters from prisoners in Russia who were members of various revolutionary organizations, including men and women who had

²*Report and Proceedings*, 1925, pp. 54-55.

been imprisoned or exiled to Siberia in the days of the Romanoffs. By a vote of 156 to 108 the convention named Russia with the other nations holding political prisoners.³

The most determined struggle came on the report of the Appeal Committee which approved the action of the General Executive Board in the matter of the New York suspensions. It declared that the suspended members "have indulged in the practice of breaking up meetings, distributing literature of a slanderous nature against the elected administration of the I. L. G. W. U., obstructing the normal activity of the Locals of which they were members, and otherwise acting to the detriment of the union as a whole. . . . Your committee is therefore honestly convinced that there exists no basis for misnaming the violations committed by such members as political crimes, and no amount of sophistry or verbal artistry can swerve it from its viewpoint." On the other hand it recommended adoption of amnesty for these offenses "for the sake of strengthening our organization." This recommendation was adopted.⁴

The same issue flared up when the committee on Officers' Report reviewed the report of the General Executive Board on the New York factional war. The committee considered the ori-

³*Ibid.*, pp. 225-32.

⁴*Report and Proceedings, 1925*, pp. 339-44.

gin of the war, the issues growing out of it, the suspensions, the actions of Locals 2, 9, and 22, the actions of the Joint Board, the Joint Committee of Action, the General Executive Board, and especially whether the latter in the exercise of its power had acted in a constitutional manner. The report was a long digest of a complicated and much involved series of events, as well as the peculiar economic tendencies which cause the industry to disintegrate into thousands of small shops, undermining union standards, creating unemployment, and bringing general dissatisfaction to the workers. The committee singled out for special condemnation those workers who left the union to become sub-manufacturers, who failed in business, and who again joined the union. They returned "with the psychology of a boss," regarding the union "as the cause of their failure and are relentless enemies of the union, trying to harm it whenever possible." This element, combined with honest discontent of members and "some acts of favoritism on the part of some former officials of the Joint Board, made a fertile soil for the seeds of discontent." The committee recommended that the convention, in view of this history, approve the action of the General Executive Board.

The "lefts" had a statement prepared in answer to this report which was equally long and which was presented as a declaration of the

"progressive delegates." It agreed with the committee report on one essential issue—the disintegrating tendencies in the industry, but held the General Executive Board responsible for not checking them. Figures were presented to show a decrease in membership since 1920, the evil of unemployment, the increasing number of small shops, alleged increasing cost of strikes, and declared that "The true causes of the present deplorable situation in our union and the industry are to be found in the abandonment of the militant policies of struggle in an organization which were the foundation of our union. The policy of our union during the period of birth and growth was a militant one." The statement denounced the "union bureaucracy," the "policy of expulsions," vindicated the "Lefts" and condemned the General Executive Board in its relation to the New York factional war. A long debate followed, but the committee's report was approved by a vote of 140 to 114.⁵

An amusing *volte face* occurred on the resolution condemning "class collaboration," i.e., arbitration, and outlining the program of the anti-administration forces. Its main feature was a declaration against submitting union demands to anybody for arbitration, singling out the Governor's Commission for special mention. The "Lefts" became doubtful of their own proposal

⁵Ibid., pp. 276-300.

as it was subjected to criticism, yet it was the gist of their opposition to what they called "class collaboration." Doubt gave way to the fear that they had placed themselves in an untenable position. If they forced the issue and obtained a decision against arbitration under any circumstances, the union would be compelled to strike no matter how favorable an aspect a given union demand might have before an arbitration body.

The "lefts," however, were forced into a position where they eventually abandoned their repudiation of arbitration and were recorded in favor of it "only after a strike has been first called." When the absurdity of their original proposal was shown to the delegates they modified their original proposal with the explanation that they were not against arbitration in principle but were against resorting to it before the masses have been called on strike. When they have been called out and the union finds itself in a weakened condition, "then and only then," according to their theory, "is it permissible for a union to resort to arbitration." Strikes are called to improve conditions and a situation might arise where a strike could be avoided by receiving a favorable decision through arbitration. The Communists and "lefts" had presented an absurd theory which even they were compelled to modify.⁶

⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 258-270.

Other important features of their program included (1) abolition of overtime; (2) employers to be "the sole contributors" to the unemployed insurance fund "and to be administered by the union;" (3) legal holidays to be paid for regardless of "whether there is work in the shop or not;" (4) "no provision in the agreement depriving the worker of the right to strike." These demands were intended as a platform to consolidate the power of the "lefts" in the union, not a program for practical realization. Their critics the following year pointed out that the "left" leaders when leading the disastrous strike of 1926 did not present this program to the employers or even suggest the necessity of fighting for it. Confronted with a real situation requiring responsibility the demands were shelved.

In the morning of the fifteenth day session the Communist bloc "bolted" the convention on the issue of proportional representation in conventions, taking 109 delegates with them. "Left" partisans in the gallery became involved in a riot a few minutes before Delegate Hyman called for the "bolt." The "Lefts" had emphasized proportional representation as one of their most important issues. The matter was in the hands of the Law Committee and it reported the following amendment to the constitution:

Local unions with a membership of 300 or less to be represented at conventions by two (2) delegates; local unions

with a membership up to 1,000 to be represented by three (3) delegates; local unions with a membership of more than 1,000 to be entitled to one (1) delegate for every 1,000 members or major portion thereof.

Delegate Hyman attacked the recommendation in a long and vigorous speech. "You are changing here and there like an acrobat on a stage in order to show to the members that you have changed," he said. Delegate Antonini, in a sarcastic reply, said, "It is not necessary to have a convention. All that is necessary is to have Locals 22 and 2 meet together and decide everything for the International and we can save the expense of a convention." Delegate Zimmerman read the clause of the peace agreement which provided that the convention should refer its "final solution" to a referendum together with "majority and minority viewpoints," and that the referendum be supervised by a committee equally representing both sides. Dubinsky, who was presiding at the time, declared that every proposition of the peace agreement and any other actions of the general officers were subject to approval or rejection of the convention as it is the convention that is the supreme body of the International union. Hyman again obtained the floor, repeated his objections, and called for the "bolt." President Sigman observed that the absent delegates had chosen the wrong time to desert. Dubinsky declared that

a caucus of "rank and filers" had been held in New York where preparations had been made for the "bolt." Sigman added that he had received information that a mass meeting had been arranged in New York at 1 o'clock in anticipation of the "bolt" and to receive the deserting delegates. With 159 delegates present the recommendation of the committee was adopted unanimously at the evening session.¹

By their rash action in leaving the convention the "Lefts" had taken a course which they had always claimed to oppose. If they remained away their action meant dual unionism; if they returned it would be an admission that they had made a mistake. Moreover, no action had been taken by the convention to justify the "bolt." At the evening session the deserting delegates returned, Delegate Zimmerman speaking for them. He declared that "it seemed to us that the way proceedings were going" that the "peace was being abrogated," that they had been informed that the administration did not intend to "ask the delegates to abrogate this clause in the peace treaty," and if this was so they were willing to resume their seats. On the basis of what "seemed" to them and a forecast of an "intention" of the administration to do something the "bolt" had occurred! A verbal duel followed in the course of which a document was read by

¹Ibid., pp. 308-316.

Delegate Hochman in which the Needle Trades Section of the Trade Union Educational League charged the "Rights" with "organizing a secret black-hand society." The dissenters took their seats.

Equally important was the conflict over the issues of proportional representation in Joint Boards and local election of officials. The first question involved a series of factors—large locals and small locals; whether the local or the membership of the local should be the basis of representation; whether representation should be proportional in an administrative body like the Joint Board as well as in a legislative body like the convention; whether a given form of representation would place small locals at the mercy of large locals or large ones at the mercy of small ones. Local 10 had equal representation on the Joint Board. It opposed proportional representation "based upon the number of members in each local, thus ignoring craft interests," as it would "permit locals having a larger membership to dominate the destinies of our local." It also favored local election of officers, including business agents, by the local's members and declared its objection to "accepting officers imposed on us by other locals by virtue of general elections."⁸

⁸Resolution in *Justice*, October 23, 1925. Problems of affiliation with the Joint Board are considered in Chapter XIII; proportional

The question was a complicated one and the General Executive Board of the International recognized the need of some change, but it urged that control of the Joint Board by a few large Locals should be avoided. The Committee on Law had six resolutions before it and in its report it observed that "Quite a number of the crafts are vastly outnumbered by others. There are created, therefore, differences of interests" and one craft should not be neglected to benefit another. It recommended the following basis of representation:

Affiliated local unions with a membership not more than 250 shall be entitled to 1 delegate; those with a membership of not more than 500 shall be entitled to 2 delegates; those with a membership of not more than 1,000 shall be entitled to 3 delegates; those with a membership of not more than 3,000 shall be entitled to 5 delegates; those with a membership of more than 3,000 shall be entitled to 7 delegates. In localities in which no local union has a membership of more than 1,000, representation to the Joint Boards shall be equal.

Local 10 was influential in the Law Committee of which Sam Shenker was a member and the report embodied concessions the cutters were willing to make. Delegate Portnoy, speaking for the "Lefts," was not satisfied. He wanted larger

representation in the Joint Board and local election of business agents are considered in Chapter XIV and need not be repeated here.

representation for the larger locals and offered the following amendment:

Locals up to 250 members should have 1 delegate; up to 500, 2 delegates; 1,000, 3 delegates. All those unions having more than 1,000 members should have one additional delegate for every additional thousand. No Locals should have more than 10 delegates to the Joint Board.

As matters stood, the committee recommended 7 delegates for Locals having 3,000 or more members; the "Lefts" wanted the largest number of delegates placed at 10; Dubinsky had proposed 8 as a compromise between the two. Moreover, it appeared to be a generous concession by a representative of Local 10 because it departed from the wishes of the local and the delegates would have to ask the members of Local 10 to ratify their action. The "Lefts" persisted and Dubinsky obtained the floor to make what proved to be the decisive speech on this issue. Addressing himself to the "Lefts," he declared, "you never in all your arguments to the membership or in your literature challenged the right of the cutters to have the same representation as the operators in the trade. You knew this would be a weak argument. You knew that this would not appeal to anyone and you have resorted to talking about Locals 64 and 45 and 82 and 21. Local 82 and Local 3 have been the issue until about three weeks ago, but now Local 82 or Local 3 is on the verge of be-

coming all right. You know what I mean by being 'all right.'* The reason why the committee brought in this report was mainly in order to eliminate that argument and any cause for just dissatisfaction, and they have eliminated it. Then they came to the other Locals. I want to confess to you that the committee had intentions of making it seven delegates for 5,000 members instead of 3,000, as they have recommended. Local 89, with a membership of over 4,000, through a concentrated campaign in the dress industry would have gotten their 5,000 members, so they would have been classified with the big powers. There would have been, however, one local that would have been left out and would have been classified among the insignificant, unimportant, Locals in the Joint Board, Local 10, by virtue of the fact that even with all your drives you cannot gain for them 100 members. And, with all your attacks and slander and mischief, you could not make them lose 100 members. They are at the wall and will remain where they are. . . .

"You came here with the cry," Dubinsky continued, "that you do not want to impose yourself, but what you are doing today demonstrates

*The speaker referred to the fact that the four small Locals had always been an outstanding issue on the question of proportional representation, but as they had become "left" they were now considered all right by the "left" leaders.

that you are not serious about it. The substitute which I suggested was one for peace and harmony, in order to be able to work in the New York Joint Board. Although we were instructed to vote for equal representation, I was willing to make that substitute because I knew if I told my membership that I violated their instructions but that I had created a condition whereby this antagonism was eliminated, I am confident that they would not only forgive me but they would applaud me. You would not accept my substitute, and why? Because you figured that with your proposition you will have four delegates more, and on account of the four delegates you are willing to lose the one opportunity at this convention to have the unanimous consent on such a vital and aggravated issue. We went 99 per cent to meet you. You did not have the courage or the desire to go one per cent in order to meet us. You will not eliminate the hot blood, you will not eliminate the fight, but you are inviting it again. . . . If you are not willing to accept a compromise which gives in to you 99 per cent, I hope that the delegates will vote for the original recommendation of the committee and let us wait for future results."

Dubinsky had threatened to withdraw his compromise if the "Lefts" insisted on their amendment. They finally and reluctantly

agreed to the Dubinsky proposal which was adopted without a dissenting vote.⁹

The issue of local election of business agents was decided with little discussion. The Committee on Law recommended an amendment to the constitution "to elect by a majority of the members of the affiliated Locals a general manager, to elect or appoint such officers, managers and committees as they may deem necessary." This had reference to Joint Boards and was adopted unanimously. The report continued with the following recommendation: "Local unions shall elect or appoint as many business agents as their quota of representation to the Joint Board entitles them, providing they are entitled to a quota of one or more, and to send such to the Joint Board. The Joint Board shall have the right to fix the salaries of the business agents, officers, managers and committees; also fix their functions, powers and terms of office. Such terms shall not, however, exceed one year."

Delegate Hyman objected. He declared that politics had been behind the last election of business agents in New York and insisted that the entire membership, rather than Locals, should elect the business agents. Dubinsky answered that "Delegate Hyman formerly advocated the very same thing that we are now supporting." Antonini added that "Hyman not so long ago

⁹*Proceedings, op. cit.*, pp. 318-330.

wanted local elections; now he has become a politician." Ninfo made a similar observation. It was apparent that the anti-administration forces had changed on this issue for temporary advantage. The committee recommendation was carried by a vote of 145 to 105.¹⁰

The struggle between "Lefts" and "Rights" continued to the election of officers except for Vice-President. Salvatore Ninfo was reelected to this office without opposition. For President Morris Sigman had an opponent in Louis Hyman. Sigman was elected by a vote of 158 to 109 for Hyman. For Secretary-Treasurer Abraham Baroff was opposed by Charles Zimmerman. Baroff was elected by a vote of 158 to 110 for Zimmerman. Of the five delegates elected to the convention of the American Federation of Labor, two, Isidor Nagler and Philip Oretsky, were members of Local 10.

The convention was the most tempestuous one ever held by a trade union in this country and it represented the high tide of influence of William Z. Foster's Trade Union Educational League. The proceedings of the convention itself showed that the logical culmination of the league's activities was secession and rival unionism. Its followers were able to avoid this result only by compromising on some of the main issues they had emphasized. Dubinsky's amend-

¹⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 302-304.

ment on representation in the Joint Board had left the "Lefts" in a puzzled state of mind. This problem had puzzled the members of the New York Locals who desired an equitable solution. For the "Lefts" it was merely a question of power. When the amendment was offered the anti-administration delegates were silent. Then they conferred and finally accepted the proposal. The amendment was a generous gesture and for that reason it was not understood by the opposition which had become so accustomed to considering all issues in terms of factional power.

The delegates of Local 10 returned to their local, satisfied with the general results of the convention, and their actions were approved by the membership. Two days later, after adjournment of the convention, the members of Local 10 gave an overwhelming vote of confidence to the administration in the election of local officials after the circulation of printed attacks by the "Lefts." Dubinsky, the main target of the circulars, received the highest vote cast, 1,106 to 242 for his opponent. The "left" candidates could muster only a round 250 votes and most of them received less.

STAFF OF OFFICERS, 1926



Standing, Left to Right: Phillip Hansel, David Fruhling, Phillip Oretzky, Joseph Fish, Benjamin Fuchs, Jacob Fleischer.
Seated, Left to Right: Samuel Perlmutter, Sam B. Shenker, David Dubinsky, Manager; Isidore Nagler, Philip Ansel.

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CHAPTER XVI

THE COMMUNIST-LED STRIKE OF 1926

The year 1926 dawned with the Communists in control of the Joint Board, confident of their power and ability, insisting on their superior generalship, becoming more arrogant in their relations with the International and the unions they did not control, and with the expectation of a strike of the cloakmakers that would give them an opportunity to demonstrate their non-compromising attitude and also that as tacticians they were superior to the "right" leadership. Their arrogance was displayed early in the year. In January they proposed to the shop chairman of cloak and dressmakers' to levy a tax of \$20 on each member for a strike fund, to be prepared for a strike that might arise when the agreement in the cloak industry expired four months later and in the dress industry later in the year.

Of the nearly 10,000 members who voted in the referendum, 5,936 were recorded in favor of the special levy and 3,930 against it. Forty per cent of the membership voted against the tax.

This occurred without any agitation by any element within the union against the tax, a thing which had never happened when there was factionalism in the union. Whenever the union was to increase dues or levy taxes the opposition faction would always try to use it to their advantage by defeating the proposals of the administration. The party agitating against an increase in dues or a tax would get the applause of the membership. In this case the "lefts" proposed the tax and the "right" wing element did not in any way agitate against it. The Joint Board voted to collect the assessment in four semi-monthly installments and provided that the fund should be administered by seven trustees of the largest Locals on terms of equality, their signatures being required for all expenditures. In March the Communist Joint Board voted that four of the seven trustees should be empowered to authorize disbursements, thus placing control of the fund in the hands of the Communists only. Two of the trustees, Salvatore Ninfo and Luigi Antonini, in stinging letters of protest resigned. The Joint Board attempted to fill the vacancies by nominating two managers of small Locals but they declined on the ground that they would be useless dummies if the four trustees retained the power to expend the fund. Early in April members of Local 10 by an overwhelming vote in a general meeting approved a protest of their

Executive Board against factional control of the organization and defense fund. With biting irony Local 10, declared that the ruling faction "has demonstrated by this act that it was hypocritical and wholly insincere when it flaunted the slogans of 'democracy' and 'no taxation without representation.'"¹

Beginning preparations for the coming struggle with the employers by this act of domination and bad faith, the Joint Board leadership awaited the report of the Governor's Commission, which, they believed, would enable them to display their superior generalship. The report and recommendations of the Commission became known late in May and they have been tersely summarized as follows:

Its salient points urged a stricter watch by the impartial chairman to see that contracts were being carried out; payment of unemployment insurance by the sub-manufacturers; wage increases over minimum rates ranging from \$2.50 to \$6; checking up by the impartial chairman on work sent out to non-union and unauthorized shops; the right of manufacturers employing a regular force of 35 or more workers to reorganize their shops once a year, provided, they did not in one year cause a total displacement of more than 10 per cent; and, finally, adoption of a system of limiting the number of sub-manufacturers with whom a jobber may do business.²

¹*Justice*, April 9, 16, 23, 1926.

²Edward Levinson, "Communists in Control," *The American Federationist*, January, 1927. Ten-thousand reprints of this article were distributed throughout the country.

The Commission had made some concessions to the claim of the workers and, while not satisfactory to them as a whole, the report would serve as a basis of negotiations. This was the view of President Sigman. The Joint Board leaders were asked, for strategic reasons, not to reject the recommendations but to accept them as a basis for conference with the employers. The International favored the acceptance of the report of the Governor's Commission in order to avoid a strike and tried to negotiate for additional concessions from the employers. If the union would accept the report as a basis for further conferences and the jobbers rejected it because it contained limitation of contractors—a proposition which they strongly opposed—the union would, from a strategic point of view, find itself in a better position, as the jobbers would bear the responsibility for involving the industry in a strike. This was the position of the International.

One of the most important phases of the leadership of the International in past struggles has been its ability to gain the sympathy of the press and public when a strike became necessary.

The Communist leaders of the Joint Board thought different. They wanted to show the cloakmakers that they cared nothing for outside opinion, that they were strong enough to repudiate the recommendations submitted by the Gov-

ernor's Commission, that they could disregard public opinion and fight the employers. They called the strike, which began on July 1, without submitting the recommendations or the question of a strike to a referendum of the membership. This had never before occurred in the history of the International. Having declared that they represented the "rank and file" and opposed "trade union bureaucracy," the Joint Board leaders began the struggle with an act that was in conflict with the democratic procedure of the International.

To avoid a referendum vote of the members which would enable them to coolly consider whether the recommendations of the Governor's Commission would serve as the basis of a conference with the employers, a mass meeting of the cloakmakers was called to meet in Madison Square Garden on June 29 and over 20,000 workers responded. Under the circumstances the views of those opposed to the calling of the strike were not presented at this meeting as this would give publicity to the divided counsels in the union. President Sigman,* Manager Hyman of the Joint Board, International Secretary

*At the Council of the Joint Board, President Sigman advised the leadership against a strike. The Joint Board ignored his views and when they decided in favor of a strike, he, as well as the other leaders of the "right" locals, pledged to support it and speak in favor of it at every public occasion so that the employers would not take advantage of the internal disagreement.

Baroff, Hugh Frayne, New York organizer of the A. F. of L., Manager Ninfo of Local 48, Sidney Hillman, President of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, Arturo Giovanitti of the Italian Chamber of Labor and Ben Gold of the Furriers addressed the meeting. President Green of the A. F. of L. pledged his support in a telegram read at the meeting. A resolution in favor of a strike submitted by the Joint Board was adopted. The Joint Board leaders had their way.

About 35,000 men and women in the industry responded to the strike call. The Joint Board had full responsibility for administration and strike strategy and received loyal support from the members and all the union officials and yet the strike began with a declaration of war against Local 10. When in opposition to the former Joint Board and now in control of the board the "Left" leaders maintained a consistent policy of trying to drive Local 10 to the "left." Continuing this policy, the Joint Board leaders assailed the character of every officer of Local 10, tried to range workers in the shops against the cutters, called meetings in opposition to Local 10 and its officers, and printed many circulars intended to weaken the local administration. In all this they failed.

Within a week after the strike began the *Freiheit*, Communist daily, made a venomous attack

on the cutters, asserting that at a Cooper Union meeting of cloak, suit and reefer cutters the "Dubinsky gang" had beaten up a number of opponents and had inaugurated a reign of terror. The report was pure fiction and Dubinsky replied through the Jewish *Daily Forward*, declaring that there was no truth in it and adding that it was necessary to warn the cutters "against being provoked by this gang, which is very anxious to start a civil war in our ranks at this grave and solemn moment when we are engaged in a determined fight against our common enemy."³

This attack by the *Freiheit* was the result of a controversy of Local 10 with the Joint Board leaders regarding a separate hall for strike meetings of the cutters. The Joint Board had denied a separate hall on the eve of the strike to the cutters, an arrangement accorded them during all previous strikes, after Local 10 had made arrangements for it with the approval of the General Manager of the Communist Joint Board. They repudiated their manager's decision, who later, inconsistently enough, supported their attitude. This action embittered the cutters who regarded it as an attempt to punish them for their loyalty to their local and the International and to weaken Local 10. The Joint Board leaders wanted to scatter the cutters into different halls where they would listen to Communist

³*Justice*, July 16, 1926.

speakers and in the hope that Local 10 would thus be penetrated by the same disintegrating influence which had shattered the unity of other Locals. The issue went before the General Strike Committee and while it was deliberating hundreds of cutters waited till 4 o'clock in the morning for the decision, knowing that it meant peace or fight, possibly life or death, for Local 10, but the General Strike Committee postponed action. Meantime Local 10 proceeded with its arrangements for a hall.

Two days later the first blow was directed against Local 10 by a decision to deny the cutters a separate hall, a decision apparently influenced by outside parties. As related in another chapter, Communists entrusted with office in trade unions are obligated to consult Communist Party officials before acting on important union matters and the delay in making the decision suggests that Communist Party agents were first consulted. The cutters met in Cooper Union on July 7 and vigorously protested against the factional actions of the Joint Board leaders and twice the cutters voted to defy the decision. Samuel Martin and several others urged defiance of the Joint Board leaders. Realizing, however, that Local 10 might involve other workers in the industry in a fight, strenuous efforts were made by President Sigman, Manager Dubinsky, Samuel Perlmutter, Isadore Nagler

and John C. Ryan, one of the oldest members of Local 10, to prevent hasty action. They urged the members to restrain their anger and to act as loyal and disciplined union men and by a small majority the members voted to comply with the decision. A direct conflict with the Joint Board leaders was thus avoided.

An important reason for urging compliance was to avoid giving the Joint Board leaders any reason for making Local 10 a scapegoat for their own incompetency as strike leaders. On the other hand, due to the opposition of Local 10 to the factional conduct of the Joint Board and the strategy of the leaders of Local 10, the board was forced to make concessions. These included weekly meetings of cutters in their own hall, presided over by Nagler and Perlmutter. In one instance the Joint Board attempted to impose one of its agents as chairman of a cutters' meeting but it did not dare to press the point. It granted Local 10 appointment of its own vice-chairman in each strike hall to care for cutters and handle their complaints as it contends that tailors are not used to handling cutters' problems and complaints. The most important point conceded was the right of Local 10 to retain its system of working cards during the strike and this enabled it to control its members as well as conditions and wages in the shops. It also gave little opportunity to the Communists to exert

any influence over the cutters as they had over workers in the other crafts.

However, representatives of Local 10 were practically ignored by the Joint Board leaders during the strike by barring them from all important committees. They defeated President Sigman as chairman of the General Strike Committee. It was an old rule that the president of the International should serve as the chairman of the General Strike Committees. They substituted Louis Hyman, who had no previous experience in strike work and made him leader of the 35,000 families involved in this great battle. They defeated Dubinsky as chairman of the Organization Committee, ignoring his experience in former strikes; they elected a Communist, Kaplan, who had never had any strike experience whatsoever. They defeated Nagler for the Hall Committee, also disregarding his experience in this work and elected Borouchowitz, a Communist, without any previous strike experience. Ninfo and Dubinsky, both vice-presidents of the International, were placed on the most unimportant and ineffective committee, the Settlement Committee. The same was true of the Picket Committee, and every other committee. Luigi Antonini, Vice-President of the International and Manager of Local 89 and Louis Pinkofsky, Manager of Local 23, were not appointed on any committee whatsoever. Old timers were

not given any responsible work in the strike because they could not be "trusted." They ignored the "right" wing leaders as well as Local 10 in planning the strategy of the strike.

Members of Local 10 were denounced as "Dubinskies," and many privileges which they were entitled to as strikers were denied them. President Sigman, the vice-presidents of the International, the leaders of Locals 48 and 23, and the whole labor movement were publicly attacked by the Joint Board leaders during the entire period of the strike. It is doubtful whether there has ever been another instance in the American labor movement of strike leaders entrusted with the welfare of thousands of workers in a struggle with the employers devoting their time and energy to continuous attacks upon various sections and the representatives of the striking army.

The leaders of the strike about the middle period of the struggle called a mass meeting of members of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers at the Central Opera House, condemning the leadership of the Amalgamated on the ground of not giving enough financial support to the strike. That the strike did not dissolve into helpless and warring fragments within a month or two after it began is due to the limitless patience, wise counsel, willingness to endure insult

and provocation of President Sigman, his closest associates and the leaders of Local 10.

During the strike weekly meetings were held in the halls for the strikers. These meetings were addressed by all officials of Local 10 and many Communists who were invited by the leaders of the strike. The cutters, too, had their weekly meetings in Arlington Hall, which were addressed by their own local's representatives and by additional speakers sent to them by the leaders of the strike. Although they sent Communists to these meetings the latter, in speaking, were careful to restrict themselves to the issues of the strike only. In one instance the cutters had to make a demand upon the leaders of the strike to send Abraham Beckerman, Manager of the Amalgamated Joint Board, himself a cutter, an invitation to address the cutters, because for many weeks they had not been willing to do this. Only in the eleventh week of the strike did they comply with the demand of the cutters.

Late in August, Governor Smith conferred with representatives of the union who proposed to settle the strike in the shops of Industrial Council members by arbitration. This was rejected by the Executive Committee of the General Strike Committee. On September 1 and 2 Sigman, Hyman, Ninfo, Dubinsky, Fish, Boruchowitz, Zirlen, Stenzor and Zimmerman, rep-

resenting the strikers, and representatives of the Industrial Council, conferred in the office of the Impartial Chairman, Raymond V. Ingersoll. No agreement was reached and the strike continued. Had the Communist leaders been willing to make a few concessions to the inside manufacturers, especially on the question of shop reorganization, they would have made a settlement more favorable than the disastrous agreement which they signed some months later. They had never before led a strike and were not intelligent enough to appreciate the opportunity to settle with the inside manufacturers and then mobilize the forces of these manufacturers and the union against the jobbers. Louis Hyman, their own leader, was attacked for not being sufficiently defiant to Governor Smith.

The Industrial Council in the midst of the strike succeeded in obtaining a sweeping injunction restraining the strikers from picketing. The strikers ignored the injunction and continued mass picketing. Hundreds of them were arrested and fined, among them being Morris Sigman, President, Jacob Halperin, Vice-President of the International, Borouchowitz, Zimmerman and others.

A Madison Square Garden mass meeting was called to protest against the injunction. Over 20,000 strikers participated in this protest demonstration. Morris Sigman, Louis Hyman,

Joseph Schlossberg of the Amalgamated, Salvatore Ninfo, Ben Gold of the Furriers, Congressman LaGuardia, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn of the Civil Liberties Union, addressed the meeting. The local and national officials of the American Federation of Labor did not attend the meeting, nor did the daily English press, which gave liberal reports of the strike, pay any attention to this demonstration. It is surmised that the American Federation of Labor leaders remained away because of the attitude of the Communist leaders towards the American Labor movement.

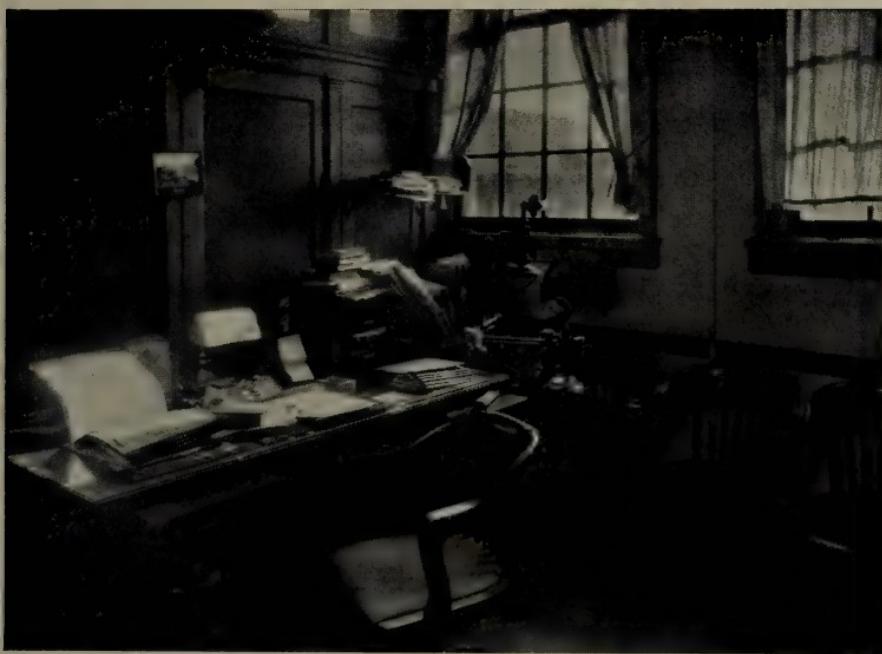
As the end of the season approached the Joint Board leaders wanted the cloakmakers to prolong the strike into the following season! They apparently thought that they would win the admiration of the strikers by this course and be the first leaders to attempt it. When the cloakmakers realized this their ranks began to break. They could no longer endure the fearful struggle nor were they willing to when they obtained knowledge of widespread scabbing in shops, not only in the suburbs but in the heart of New York as well. More amazing was the knowledge that the Communist Joint Board of the Furriers had permitted fur trimmings to be supplied scab shops and this had been an important factor in undermining the strike. One revelation after another of the incompetent management of the

Joint Board leaders compelled them to make some settlement to save the Union. A settlement with the Industrial Council was inevitable.

Knowing that there were no more funds for strike benefits, the leaders hastened to negotiate a settlement so that the strikers could be sent out of the halls to their shops although there was no work and upon their return they remained idle for many weeks, as the settlement was made when the season had ended. Strike funds were exhausted despite the generous contributions made by all sections of the labor movement who were repaid by venomous attacks. The "Rights" had obtained the whole-hearted support of the strike by the Jewish *Daily Forward*, a bitter opponent of Communism, and other "right-wing" institutions. *The New Leader*, a Labor and Socialist weekly, issued special strike editions for several weeks. The Amalgamated Clothing Workers, which has had to fight Communist intrigues, gave \$30,000 to the strike and advanced a loan of \$175,000. The Workmen's Circle, a workers' benevolent organization and an avowed "right-wing" organization, taxed its 80,000 members fifty cents each for the strike and advanced the sum of \$25,000, an action it had never before taken even when "right-wingers" were leading a strike. The Detroit convention of the American Federation of Labor, at the request of delegate Nagler and others of the In-

ternational, endorsed the strike. Matthew Woll, Vice-President of the American Federation of Labor, and John Lewis, President of the Miners' Union, made eloquent appeals to the delegates of the American Federation of Labor in support of the strike. President Green then issued an appeal to affiliated organizations to give financial assistance. Tens of thousands of dollars were realized from this appeal, a sum in excess of all previous contributions to strikes of cloakmakers. The total sum at the disposal of the strike leaders is estimated at \$3,500,000, yet while these sums were coming into their hands the Joint Board leaders could not refrain from viciously attacking the contributors. Communist leaders called an illegal meeting of members of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers and there attacked the Amalgamated. They did not spare the Workmen's Circle, the Jewish *Daily Forward* and the American Federation of Labor. The Philadelphia cloakmakers were singled out for special attack because they were "right" and loyal to the International. The only union that obtained the approval of the Communist leaders was the Furriers who contributed \$60,000 to the strike although they owed \$100,000 to the Joint Board which was loaned to the Furriers when the latter were on strike. It became evident that the Joint Board leaders were interested only in obtaining prestige for the Communist move-

OFFICE OF MANAGER-SECRETARY



COUNCIL ROOM



ment, slandering those not in accord with their policies and praising those who alone had earned condemnation.

As this is written (late in February) no final accounting has been made of the enormous strike fund handled by the Joint Board leaders but a preliminary investigation has revealed some interesting items, a digest of which follows:

The Hall Committee . . . had spent a total of \$200,000 up to November 15, when these figures were tabulated. The members of this committee were to have received from \$10 to \$15 a week as compensation. The remainder of the expenditure is put down to "expense." The Organization Committee, which had charge of investigating prospective signers of individual agreements, spent \$100,000. . . . Then there was the Law Committee. . . . Its expenditure, in addition to legal fees (\$62,000), court expenses (\$17,000), bail bonds (\$52,000), was \$300,000.

The Picket Committee offers an even more interesting case. Up to November 18, it had spent \$200,000. . . . The Out of Town Committee spent \$476,000 on its work.⁴

Other items revealed by the preliminary report show the following: Bath Beach Committee, \$34,000; Brooklyn Committee, \$33,000; Brownsville Committee, \$16,000; Harlem Committee, \$19,000; Printing, \$14,000; Strike Benefits, \$1,215,000; Special Relief, \$148,000; Miscellaneous, \$26,000.

At the meeting of the General Strike Com-

⁴Levinson, "Communists in Control" *The American Federationist*, January, 1927.

mittee, which was intended to be the parliament of the strike, practical matters regarding the struggle were never taken up nor were plans outlined. The main function of the General Strike Committee, and especially when the strike was prolonged, when scapegoats had to be gotten for the continuation of the strike, was weekly attacks upon political opponents. One meeting was taken up entirely with condemning Vice-President Ninfo for having interviewed Mr. Finder, the President of the Industrial Council. The following meeting was devoted to severely condemning Fish, chairman of the Law Committee and a member of Local 10, for paying fines for arrested girl pickets instead of permitting them to go to jail. They considered this a betrayal of the principles of class struggle. At the following meeting an attack was made upon Dubinsky for advising the cutters to receive double pay for work on Saturday instead of single pay. At the next meeting an attack was made upon the leadership of the Philadelphia Joint Board, claiming that they were responsible for all the scab work in New York, although Philadelphia is a market having only about 750 workers.

When the strike approached the eighteenth week and no prospect for immediate settlement was in view, at the next meeting of the General Strike Committee a demonstration was

staged for amalgamation, an issue which involves considerable disagreement among the workers and which was expected by the Communists to be solved in the midst of the strike. With this question, too, they wanted to place the leaders of the Amalgamated and the leaders of the International in a predicament and to have an issue that would enable them to assert that the strike could have been won if amalgamation of the needle trades had been carried through in the midst of the strike.

On November 12 the General Strike Committee and the shop chairmen approved the agreement negotiated with the Industrial Council. At mass meetings on November 15 the strikers affected by the settlement accepted it although there was general dissatisfaction with it. *Justice* published the agreement in full in the issue of November 19 together with an analysis of it in parallel columns, the first showing what the union had demanded, the second what the Governor's Commission had recommended, and the third what the settlement contained. The comparison showed that the agreement was less favorable than what could have been obtained on the basis of the commission's recommendations in May. Union members were staggered by what had happened and the Joint Board leaders, realizing the approaching storm, prepared to defend themselves. The settlement did not af-

fect the jobbers and the struggle continued against them but it was waged by a disillusioned and disheartened army. In a statement to the membership analyzing the settlement in detail, the General Executive Board of the International declared: "Weighing gains against losses the cloakmakers have thus gotten less than was offered them voluntarily about half a year ago. For this they have been on strike about 20 weeks. They have been deprived of earnings for a whole season and have suffered untold misery and privation. The strike has cost the union about \$3,500,000 and has left it under the burden of a tremendously heavy debt. Scab production has been increased in all directions and a new crop of sub-standard non-union shops, in the New York market and outside of it, has been produced. It will take the union years of hard work and sacrifice to repair the damage which the ill-fated strike has caused."⁵

The statement issued by the General Executive Board was in reply to a public attack made by the leaders of the Joint Board, charging the International with sabotaging the strike. The leaders of the strike praised the settlement as a victory because they were successful in obtaining a reduction of two hours and eighteen months later two additional hours, although reorganization and other fundamental demands

⁵*Justice*, December 3, 1926.

were conceded to the employers. The defeat of the strikers, the waste of energy, money and sacrifices would have been unnecessary if they had accepted the Governor's Commission's report.

The settlement made with the Industrial Council was a forecast of what the remaining strikers could expect. The American, the organization of the cloak sub-manufacturers, demanded an agreement similar to the one signed with the Industrial Council representing the inside manufacturers, claiming that the Communist leaders had promised such an agreement. However, the leaders did not have the courage to sign a similar agreement whereupon the sub-manufacturers declared a lockout. President Sigman had already announced his readiness to take over the strike providing the "Communist leaders get out and stay out." Despairing members urged the International officials to save the union and the members from further misfortune and the General Executive Board responded by issuing a statement on December 13 which declared that it had taken over the strike. "The General Executive Board," continued the statement, "has appointed managers and provisional executive boards for the Locals of the Joint Board to administer these Locals in the interest of the cloak-makers and not in the interest of the Communist Party. Special headquarters for each and every local and for the Joint Board have been ap-

pointed, at which all the work of the organization will be carried on until normal conditions have been restored to our union.”*

In making the settlement, thanks to the initiative of the Joint Board, Messrs. N. and R. Sadowsky, proprietors of a prominent firm in the trade, and Arnold Rothstein, played an important role. Considering the claim of the “Lefts” that they represented a “revolutionary” unionism, these mediators are worth considering. The Sadowskys, whose workers were striking, were large employers and the union always had difficulty in enforcing union conditions in their factory and during the strike they had operated a number of non-union shops. Their record gave no promise of their being impartial in considering issues involved in the settlement. As for Rothstein, he had no knowledge of the problems of the industry or the union while his name had also been associated with a recent baseball scandal. Informed members of the union and students of the industry were unable to understand why the Communist Joint Board should believe it a sin against the organized workers to accept men like Colonel Lehman, George Gordon Battle, Prof. Lindsey Rogers and Judge Shientag—members of Governor Smith’s Commission—while acceptance of Sadowsky and Rothstein was good “revolutionary class struggle tactics.”

**Justice*, December 17, 1926.

Following this announcement the International located the provisional Joint Board in its building, assigning the entire third floor for this purpose. The Communists retaliated by staging a "demonstration" in front of the building and a "march" to the building of the Jewish *Daily Forward*. The columns of *Justice* were now devoted to a blistering revelation of the blundering, arrogance and misdeeds of the "left" leaders while the International was acting with a firm hand. Ten days before the International deposed the "lefts" thousands of cloakmakers packed Cooper Union and other thousands were turned away. Frantic with disappointment, enraged over the tragedy that faced them, they demanded that the International take the action which it soon took. A committee of 25 cloakmakers was appointed to get Sigman and Dubinsky who were attending the final session of the General Executive Board. Upon their entrance to Cooper Union they were greeted with a tremendous roar of approval and it was evident that the International could act with the support of a big majority of the members. Communists answered these demonstrations by calling mass meetings of "cloakmakers," i.e., their partisans in the union and such other workers who were Communists, but it was apparent that the tide was running against them.

Their master stroke into which they put all

their energy and financial resources was a mass meeting in the new Madison Square Garden. "Cloakmakers" were publicly invited to attend and President Sigman urged the members of the union to accept the invitation. Meantime every member of the Workers' (Communist) Party and of the Trade Union Educational League in Greater New York and vicinity received a letter to attend the Madison Square Garden meeting which was announced to be held at noon on Saturday, December 18. As early as 9.30 cloakmakers and Communists began to gather at the entrances. Communist guards were stationed at the entrances and inside was a long file of police and Communists who instructed the former whom to admit and whom to reject. Thousands of cloakmakers not known to be faithful to the Communist leaders were denied admission. Their union cards in many cases were torn up. Some cloakmakers who passed the outside and inside guards were later "spotted" and ejected from the garden. Communist cloakmakers, painters, jewelers, machinists, pedlers, furriers and shopkeepers who showed the letter received from the Workers' (Communist) Party were admitted. President Sigman and the leaders of Local 10 were among the many union officers who were denied admission. The intimate co-operation between the Communists and the Police Department was a remarkable feature of the

"cloakmakers" demonstration and gave rise to the cry of "police collaboration." "In such fashion," declared *Justice*, "fully 15,000 cloakmakers were barred from the meeting which, outside the building, turned into an overwhelming demonstration of protest. Good Communists, opponents of 'class collaboration' in industrial disputes, worked hand in glove with the capitalist police in violently expelling cloakmakers from a meeting advertised 'for cloakmakers.'"⁷ The old Joint Board members were unable to understand that they were rubbing salt into gaping wounds by this amazing compound of insult, police coercion and crass stupidity.

The most astonishing incident of the strike took place at the Madison Square Garden meeting, where Hyman announced that the following Monday the cloakmakers striking against the jobbers would be returned to work without a final settlement with the jobbers. They feared that the International might be successful in settling the strike with the jobbers against whom it was originally called. This statement considerably hampered the International in reaching an immediate settlement with the jobbers. There were preliminary favorable understandings with the heads of the Merchants' Association, two days before that meeting, and a final word was to be received by the union Mon-

⁷*Justice*, December 24, 1926.

day. But instead of a settlement the association leaders declared it was unnecessary as the newspapers had carried reports of the Madison Square Garden meeting to the effect that the workers would return to work without a settlement. At one of the informal conferences with the leaders of the Jobbers' Association they were rejoicing over the mistakes made by the deposed Joint Board leadership and how miserably and ineffectively the strike had been conducted against them. One jobbers' leader recalled the fact that when the jobbers' association was ready to commit the mistake of announcing the repudiation of the Commission's recommendations, it was the Joint Board leaders who saved them by being the first to reject the recommendations.

In other cities the Communists called mass meetings in support of the old Joint Board leaders of New York. The "Rights" turned out in great numbers in Chicago, Baltimore, Boston and Philadelphia and transformed the proposed Communist demonstrations into anti-Communist protest meetings.

In New York City a call was sent by a trade union committee to the trade unions of the city to send delegates to a conference on December 21 to consider the situation brought about by the Communists. Four-hundred delegates assembled and organized a united front representing 300,000 members of trade unions in 17 trades to

put an end to the disastrous methods employed by Communists. This conference organized the Committee for the Preservation of Trade Unions. Originally planned as a New York alliance, it immediately became national in scope because of the presence of delegates from Chicago, Boston and Philadelphia. Declaring that the Communists seek to "make trade unions conscripts of the oligarchy known as the Communist Party," the conference decided to raise funds, hold meetings and publish literature to root Communists "out of places of power and influence" in the trade unions.

While this uprising was taking place, and on the day of the Madison Square Garden Meeting, Local 10 held its election of officers, nearly 2,000 members participating in the election. Out of the ruins of the strike Local 10 had emerged as strong as ever and practically immune from the disintegrating "left" influence which had so injured other Locals. The cloak and suit cutters, however, were dissatisfied with the settlement regarding wages and at shop meetings following the settlement they had expressed their dissatisfaction. Dubinsky, Nagler and Perlmutter negotiated with members of the Industrial Council and at the meeting of Local 10 on December 6 Dubinsky announced "amid tumultuous applause and shouts of approval that, beginning with the first week in January, the cloak and suit

cutters receiving less than \$60 will receive a flat increase of \$3."⁸ It was with the memory of this gain in wages despite the chaos that had threatened the destruction of the International that the cutters proceeded to elect their officers. Dubinsky again headed the poll with 1,890 votes to 155 for his opponent. The majorities for the other administration candidates were almost as large, the highest "left" vote polled being 220.

Meantime the International was rebuilding the almost shattered structure of the unions and the same issue of *Justice* that reported Local 10's election carried the gratifying news that the International had obtained from an Arbitration Board a decision which substantially modified some of the disastrous terms offered by the Communists to the American Association, representing the contractors of the industry.

The Communists preferred to prolong the strike instead of submitting the questions in dispute to arbitration. This was due to their anxiety to remain loyal to their "revolutionary" program of no arbitration and no "class collaboration." The International, when it took control of the situation, publicly declared that if by arbitration further sufferings and misery for the workers could be avoided it would resort to arbi-

⁸*Justice*, December 10, 1926. Readers should consult the important data on wages in the Appendix which show that Locals affected by Communism made less progress than Local 10 in the matter of wages.

tration. The decision of the board proved in what a ridiculous position the "lefts" had placed themselves and that the International leaders had taken a practical step.

Late in December fifty "cloak chairmen" picked at a meeting packed with Communists from various unions not affiliated with the International and assuming to be a "nonpartisan" committee, made peace overtures to the International. The secretary of the committee, L. Kleinman, had been a recent proprietor of a non-union shop in the industry who had given trouble to the union. The American Civil Liberties Union was also approached by the deposed Communist officials of Locals, 2, 9 and 35 to serve in supervising elections of union officials although the majority of the members had already registered with the International. The Civil Liberties Union declined the invitation and President Sigman declared that such an election would be a fraud. As for the "non-partisan" peace offer, Sigman answered: "They cry for peace, but there will be no peace until the union is freed from their domination and that of the unbalanced theoreticians of Moscow and Chicago." The registration undertaken by the International was itself an election. Two weeks later the "non-partisan" committee arranged a mass meeting in Manhattan Lyceum where the International was denounced and a resolution was

adopted declaring in favor of an "opposition union" if within 48 hours the International did not make peace with the "non-partisan" committee. Prominent Communists addressed the meeting and Kleinman, the former non-union employer—said to be a member of the Communist Party—was a prominent figure at the meeting. President Sigman denounced the gathering as "Communist camouflage."¹⁰ Many of the committee of 50 later deserted and registered with the International.

Meantime the few "Lefts" in Local 10 were again circulating broadsides within the union and it developed that cutters had received these broadsides through the mails. The question arose, How did the Communists obtain a list of the names and addresses of the members? On December 27 the members of Local 10 met in Cooper Union to install the officers elected in the recent election and among the speakers were President Sigman, Matthew Woll, Vice-President of the American Federation of Labor, Hugh Frayne, New York organizer, and Dubinsky. John C. Ryan, a veteran cutter and member of Local 10, presided. In his address Dubinsky held aloft one of the Communist circulars received by cutters through the mails and recalled the fight made by the "Lefts" against granting Local 10 a separate hall for meetings.

¹⁰Justice, December 31, 1926.

during the strike. He declared that the plans for refusing the hall and for registration of the cutters were made before any anticipation of the strike. "They used the registration," he said, "not to follow up scabs or those who did not report in the halls—they used it to give the names to the Workers' (Communist) party. This answers the question of many with respect to the source of the addresses."¹¹

The International continued to mop up the mess left by the old leaders by signing an agreement with the dress jobbers Association on January 8 which brought a declaration from the old leaders that they would not recognize it and a threat to call a strike. The settlement renewed the old agreement, including the 40-hour week and responsibility of jobbers for the wages of workers employed by contractors! Four days later the International signed an agreement with the cloak jobbers which practically renewed the old agreement. This settlement ended the series of blunders which had led the New York unions of the ladies' garment industry to the brink of ruin. A dying gesture was made by the old leaders of the deposed Joint Board on February 24 when they sent "pickets" to twelve dress and cloak shops, which had settled with the International, in an effort to intimidate the union workers. The latter ignored the "pickets," and the

¹¹*Justice*, December 31, 1926.

following day the "pickets" assaulted the union men. Many incidents of this character occurred in the ensuing weeks of the struggle.¹²

In Local 10 a small group of Communist followers were brought under strict discipline. They had organized a "Cutters' Welfare League"** and Dubinsky reported its activities to the Executive Board on January 27. Early in January the league members had met at the headquarters of the Communist Local 22 and were addressed by a deposed leader of the old Joint Board who urged the league members to defy Local 10 and not to pay dues to the local. The league members resolved not to pay dues or to obtain working cards from Local 10. Berlin, an active leader of the group, had some years before sponsored a resolution in Local 10 providing for the suspension of members holding membership in a league similar to the present one organized by the Communists. At the membership meeting of Local 10 in Cooper Union on December 26 the executive board was empowered to take all disciplinary measures against the disloyal elements in Local 10 and to utilize the working card system as a means of registration. At the following meeting a recommendation was sub-

¹²*Justice*, January 28, 1927.

**There is reason for believing that the name "Welfare League" was chosen to confuse it with the Good and Welfare League of 1914-1921.

EXECUTIVE BOARD, 1927



Top Row, Left to Right: Joel Abramowitz, Jack Kohs, Morris Berland, Ben Evry, Frank G. Lewis.
Center Row, Left to Right: Morris Feller, Louis Pankin, Israel Ostroff, Fred Ratner, Harry Shapiro, Vice-Pres.
Bottom Row, Left to Right: Nathan Saperstein, Louis Forer, Max Stoller, Chairman; Max Gordon, Meyer Freed,
man, Maurice W. Jacobs, President.

SIX TYPES OF CUTTERS' KNIVES



①



②



③



④



⑤



⑥

1. Jigger Knife. 2. Short Knife. 3. Long Knife. 4. Round Wheel, Machine. 5. Up and Down, Machine. 6. Bandsaw Machine.

mitted to the members which was unanimously approved and which declared that "anyone who pays dues or secures a working card outside of Local 10 is guilty of giving assistance to or organizing a dual union. And those guilty of this offense will be considered as automatically suspended from the rolls of Local 10." Eighteen of the offending members who failed to comply with this decision were automatically suspended.¹³

Confident that the years of heart-breaking strife were coming to a close, that the International was on the road to rapid and complete recovery, that the disturbance within Local 10 had been reduced to a minimum, the members turned their attention to the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the local on March 26 and 27. The publication of this history had been twice postponed because of the grave situation that had faced Local 10 and its sister unions in New York. The celebration is planned not only to rejoice over twenty-five years of notable achievements, but as a victory for the ideals of labor solidarity and intelligent unionism over exotic and disintegrating influences which had brought civil war among the organized workers in the ladies' garment industry.

¹³*Justice*, February 14, 18, 1927.

CHAPTER XVII

THE KNIFE*

The development in the tools of production has brought revolutionary changes in industry and has profoundly influenced and largely shaped the institutions of modern civilization. The tool of the cutter has been affected by invention and it has assumed many types before the invention of the present power-driven knife. It is the purpose of this chapter to briefly consider the alteration in the cutters' tool and the effect its evolution has had on the cutter. The material on this theme is scanty but enough is available to roughly sketch the development of the knife from the simple instrument used by the tailor in the colonial period to the tool now in use.

The first cutting instrument was a pair of shears. So long as the tailor was required to cut one garment at a time or even a few layers of cloth the long shears was sufficient. Inventions in industry made possible the satisfaction of in-

*So many have contributed information used in this chapter that it is impractical to burden each page with footnotes. Credit is given at the end of the chapter.

creased wants and these wants included clothing. The revolution in the textile industries in the first two decades of the nineteenth century made possible an increased consumption of the lighter textiles, such as women's dress goods and linen fabrics. For the workers in general other than coarse working clothes had been unknown. On the other hand "The expensive suit of the custom tailor was worn only on holidays and special occasions, and one such suit did service for a lifetime. The two great classes in society were the well-to-do upper class, who of course patronized the custom tailor, and the great mass of manual wage earners whose chief demand was . . . for coarse working clothes."¹

The increased demand for clothing for both men and women soon exceeded the capacity of the tailor with his shears to supply. He might add to the number of layers of cloth to be cut but the number was limited because of the strain on his hand. The invention of the sewing machine in 1846 and its manufacture on a large scale a few years later so increased the demand for ready-made clothing that cutting with the shears became too slow to supply the demand. A substitute was found in the short knife with which, by pressing the weight of the body, the cutter was able to cut more layers of cloth. Incidentally, the use of the short knife was the be-

¹Pope, *The Clothing Industry in New York*, p. 2.

ginning of a division of labor whereby some workers in the shop began to give their entire time to cutting garments.

In the ladies garment trade in New York City the short knife appeared early in the seventies where it had its origin in the need of cutting the neck slope in shirts. It was difficult to cut the slope with the shears without the first insertion making an irregular cut. Joseph Van Nostrand, a member of the Gotham Knife Cutters, conceived of the idea of making the first cut with a razor which proved to be the first short knife used by shirt cutters. The shears was not immediately discarded. For a time the first cut was made with the razor and then completed with the shears but experiment showed that the complete cut could be made with the razor and the shears was abandoned for short knives which led to the manufacture of a short knife for cutters.

Eventually the short knife was also found to be too slow for the constantly increasing demand for clothing. It also had an important defect. In New York City the manufacturers provided cutters with the short knife and also incurred the expense of grinding them. The knife required frequent sharpening because of coming into contact with the wooden tables while cutting cloth. The criss-cross gashes in the tables carved out small sections which required carpenters to re-

pair. Owing to the short-sightedness of many cutters the manufacturers finally refused to provide knives or to incur the expense of grinding them. Cutters often brought table knives from their homes and these were added to the short knives when the latter were sent to be sharpened! Upon discovering that he was grinding the table knives of the cutter's family as well as the knife for cutting garments, the manufacturer refused to provide knives or to grind them. This cost fell to the cutters as long as the hand knife was used.

The long knife succeeded the short one and for the same reason that the latter succeeded the shears—the demand for increased production. With the long knife the cutter was able to cut up to six inches high. Cutting with the shears and the short knife, especially the latter, involved considerable strain but the long knife tested the endurance of the cutter. It was operated through a slit in the table and was from 20 to 28 inches in length. The excessive strain on the cutter due to the use of this knife in the impure atmosphere in which many cutters worked increased the number of deaths from tuberculosis and the cutters fought its introduction. The Gotham Knife Cutters adopted a resolution in 1884 to be incorporated in the by-laws declaring that "no member of this Assembly be allowed to use the big knife or other than

the small or draw knife in common use and that no member of this Assembly be allowed to help or assist in any way those who use the big knife."

However, the cutters were not sufficiently organized to prevent the use of the long knife and even Gotham was finally forced to make some concessions. In 1887 the Gotham cutters adopted a resolution permitting the Sternglantz shop to have one long knife and then another resolution named one of its own members as being permitted to use this knife in the same shop. Undoubtedly the unorganized shops were introducing the long knife and the increased production realized from its use gave these shops an advantage in the competitive struggle for business. Facing this situation, the Gotham cutters had to abandon their opposition to the long knife. The evolution of their policy from one of antagonism to one of reconciliation is recorded in the two resolutions mentioned above.

Simultaneously with the appearance of the long knife the "jigger knife" was introduced but it was not used as extensively as the long knife. Its advantage was the same as that of the long knife in that the cutter could cut a deeper layer of cloth. The "jigger knife" had a curved edge similar in shape to a half-moon and the chief strain in operating it was on the wrist. By working the curved edge up and down against the cloth the cut was made. The motion

of the hand in using this knife gave it its peculiar name. The constitution of the United Cloak and Suit Cutters in 1893 recognized only the short knife, the machine and the shears as the tools of the trade and prohibited "any member using the long or the jigger knife." Members who were convicted of using either of the prohibited knives were to be fined \$50 for each offense.

In the early 'eighties an attempt was made to introduce a tool used in England known as the "shoulder knife" but without success. An Irish cutter by the name of White working in the shirt shop of Ballim Brothers at 14 Walker Street brought such a knife with him but the cutters would not permit him to unpack it. It was a long instrument and pressure for cutting was exerted by the shoulder. The New York cutters had learned that its use in England had so broken the health of cutters that they determined to prevent its importation. Whether the shoulder knife was more deadly than the long knife in this respect is a matter of conjecture.

The introduction of a new knife in the industry was not a matter of an abrupt change at any stage in the evolution of the tool. For a long period both the long and the short knife were used in cutting shops. Although the Gotham cutters were permitting a member here and there to use the long knife beginning with the

year 1887, the short knife continued in use for many years thereafter, especially in the cloak and suit trade. When the United Cloak and Suit Cutters' Association reorganized in 1901 they inserted as Article XIX of their constitution the following declaration: "This Association recognizes as the implements of the trade only the short knife and the shears." This clause shows that the two earliest tools of the craft were in use long after the long knife was introduced and this union fought to prevent the introduction of any others. When the cutters were amalgamated into one organization in 1906 no mention was made of the knife. By this time the power-driven machine had come into common use and while some cutters continued to oppose machines, opposition to them was ineffective.

Still another knife appeared before the coming of the modern machine which represented an interesting half-way stage between the hand knife and the machine in that it represented some aspects of both. This resembled somewhat the human arm to the end of which was attached a circular disc which rapidly revolved and was operated by a belt. This was a rather clumsy affair although the rotary cutting blade could be moved in any direction for cutting curves. The blade was exposed and was considered dangerous by the cutters. The principle of the hand

knife survived in this machine in that the arm was guided by the hand of the cutter while the advance to the modern machine was evident in the rotary wheel knife which obtained its power from a motor.

This arm machine was preceded by a cutting machine which, like the one just described, was not portable like the modern machine. Both were stationary. This first cutting machine appeared in the market about 1872 according to one account and in the early 'eighties according to another. This was a power-driven straight blade, the cutting being done by the bottom of the blade. It was a number of years before this machine was generally used and it appeared mostly in men's clothing factories. The straight blade and rotary blade stationary machines, the earliest being driven by steam power, had a cutting radius of about five feet. If the lay was longer it had to be moved up to the machine after the section near the machine had been cut. These machines were either high priced or sold on royalty and they were never popular. They were a forecast of the modern portable machines that can be moved to any part of the cutting table.

In the production of wealth in modern society the worker devotes a portion of the day to producing values which return to him in wages. The rest of the day is devoted to producing values

that go to the owners of industry. Improved machinery enables the owners to shorten the period in which the workers produce for themselves and lengthens the period in which they produce values for the owners of industry. Because of this law of economics the workers may actually increase their wages and improve their standard of living while at the same time producing more values for the owners of industry. Let us assume that the working hours are eight per day, that the workers devote four hours to producing values represented by their wages and the remaining four hours they produce values for the owners. A machine is introduced that increases the volume of production and the working hours remain the same. The worker still works eight hours but the hours in which he works for himself are reduced to three and the hours which he works for the owners are increased to five. This is a rough presentation of what follows the introduction of improved power-driven machinery in industry. The total values produced increase while the relative share of the values received by the worker declines although his wage may increase and his standard of living may thereby improve.

Cutters have been affected by this economic evolution the same as all other workers in industry. In 1898 the United States Commissioner of Labor made a comparison between hand and

machine production in the garment industry a digest of which is given by Pope. The following items are of interest to cutters: "Cutting machines, cutting sixteen thicknesses, would cut in four hours thirty-two and five-tenths minutes, as compared with thirty-three hours and twenty minutes work by hand. For 100 vests the cutting, which if done by hand would take eleven hours and forty minutes, occupies one hour and thirty-four minutes. For cutting 100 pairs of pants, the time under hand production was sixteen hours and forty minutes; under machine production two hours and fifty-eight minutes. To cut button holes for 100 coats required under hand production three hours and twenty minutes; under machine production, seventeen and five-tenths minutes."² When one considers all the other machines that have been introduced in the garment industry we get some comprehension of the enormous increase in the productive power of the workers in the past one hundred years.

In 1891 the electric cutter equipped with a ro-

²Pope, *The Clothing Industry in New York*, p. 26. This analysis applies in the main to cutting in the men's clothing industry and the figures are only suggestive for the women's garment trade. I have been unable to find a similar comparison in the latter industry. A report in the Miscellaneous Series of the U. S. Department of Commerce, No. 32, presents an interesting study of the development of all types of machines in the garment industry which is very valuable but to my surprise only one brief paragraph is devoted to the history and development of cutting machines.

tary knife appeared. About the same time the straight knife electric cutter, the blade operating vertically, appeared on the market but the vibration and noise of this machine made it unpopular and it was some years later before a simpler, better constructed, and more useful straight knife machine was introduced. The rotary and straight knife machines were at first not equipped with guards to protect the cutter from injury but later models remedied this defect. Both manufacturers and cutters were at first reluctant to accept the modern machines and there were instances where long knife cutters "raced" with machines where their utility was being tested, the cutters hoping that their skill with the hand knife would demonstrate that the new machines were unnecessary.

Mr. N. Komow, an inventor, was the first man to build a five inch rotary machine knife which was constructed in 1895. He considered the following qualifications as necessary for an efficient machine: (1) It must be convenient to operate; (2) it must make a good cutting edge; (3) be safe to operate; (4) have sufficient power with the least weight; (5) must not heat in operation; (6) be noiseless so as not to disturb the cutter; (7) eliminate vibration to obtain a smooth edge; (8) leave an unobstructed view of the knife and marking; (9) and a machine for each type of

cutting, believing that one machine could not be used for all purposes.

All of these qualifications have been realized in the various cutting machines now in use. A sharpening device has been added, guards protect the cutter from injury, the machine may be moved to any part of the cutting table, and the knives vary from three to eight inches, the size used depending upon the lay of cloth to be cut. The machine knife has become so perfected that it is difficult to conceive of any important improvements to be made.

In the year 1922 the cutters became apprehensive because of the appearance of a 12-inch vertical machine knife in one shop. "The cutters realize how difficult it is to cut a lay with an 8-inch machine, let alone 12-inch machines," wrote Joseph Fish for Local 10. The local took the matter up with various companies manufacturing such machines with the result that no more 12-inch machines were manufactured. In March, 1923, General Manager Dubinsky at a local meeting called attention of the members to the introduction of 10-inch vertical machine knives in a number of cutting departments. "This is the first time these machines have been placed on the market," wrote Fish, "and the members are quite incensed over it. The cutters working in the shops where these machines have been placed are very much opposed to their use

on the ground that they impair their health. . . . The cutters do not intend to endanger their health and energy to the extent that these machines require.”⁸

The evolution of the cutters’ tool, interesting as it is, has not produced the complex machinery that is characteristic of many other industries. Nor has it stripped the cutter of his skill as machinery has in many other industries. The machine knife still requires a term of apprenticeship for the worker to learn its use. Whether the machine can be improved or another one take its place that will increase production without drawing upon the physical stamina of the cutter is doubtful.

NOTE

Those who have contributed their recollections of the development of the knife in the industry include the following: Jesse Cohen, “Dolly” Levine, Charles W. Serrington, Charles Jacobsen, C. N. Caldwell of the Eastman Machine Company, and N. Komow, President of the U. S. Cloth Cutting Machine Co. For their help in writing this chapter the author is duly grateful.

⁸Joseph Fish in *Justice*, June 16, 1922, and March 9, 1923.

APPENDIX I

WAGES AND HOURS

A Summary of Achievements

The story of the Cutters' Union would not be complete if the information of its achievements, spread throughout this book, were not summarized and presented in as concrete a form as possible, at least insofar as the working hours and wages are concerned.

HOURS OF WORK

Prior to 1900, the working hours of the cutters, as well as all other workers of the trade, were as long as the employer would make them. And the worst of it was that there was no uniformity. A cutter who in one place worked 66 hours a week was not sure that on a new job he would not have to work 72 hours. The individual employer was the one who dictated the number of hours a worker must put in during the week.

From 1900 to 1910 the situation was slightly better, but only slightly. Sixty hours and even 66 hours per week were not uncommon, especially in shops where no union cutters were working. However, just before 1910, the cutters who were practically the only ones who had some sort of an effective organization in the ladies' garment trade, had succeeded in reducing the number of working hours to 56 per week in a large number of shops. This was, of course, exclusive of overtime.

The reduction of the number of working hours since 1910 was as follows:

Year	<i>Weekly Working Hours</i>	
	<i>Cloak Trade</i>	<i>Dress Trade</i>
Before 1910	56	56
1910	50	52
1911	50	52
1912	50	52
1913	50	50
1914	50	50
1915	50	50
1916	49	49
1917	49	49
1918	49	49
1919	44	44
1920	44	44
1921	44	44
1922	44	44
1923	44	40
1924	44	40
1925	44	40
1926	42	40
1927	42	40
1928	40	40

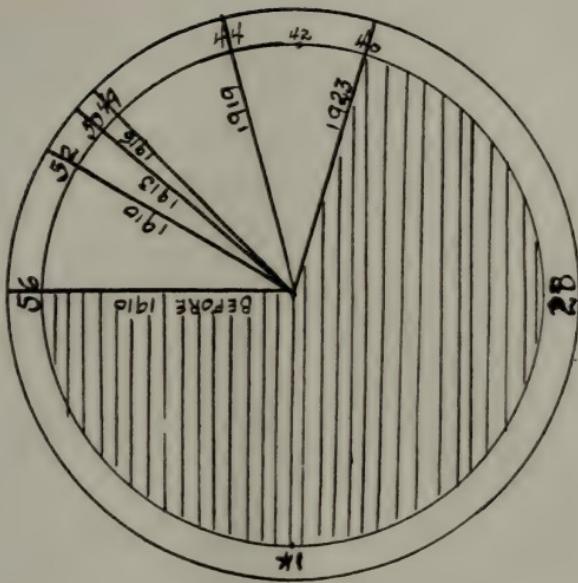
The table is self-explanatory. Together with the two graphs (clocks), it shows gains unprecedented in the history of the labor movement the world over.

It is to be noted that the reduction of the number of hours of work from 56 to 40 means that at present the working hours of the cutters are only 60% of what they used to be before the organization of the Union.

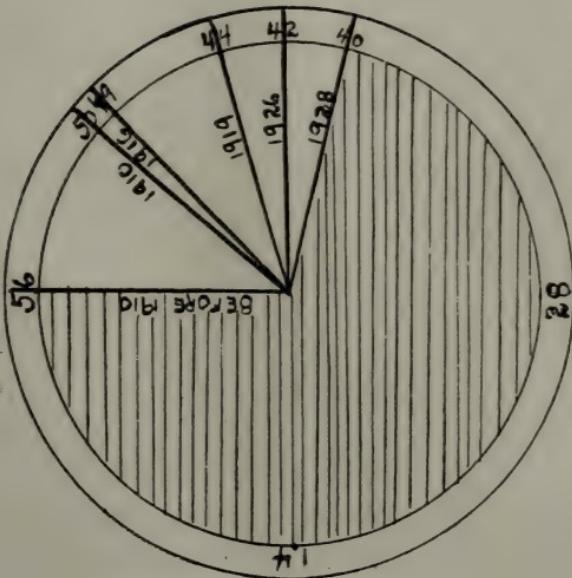
MINIMUM WAGE SCALES

Had the wages of the cutters remained stationary, the reduction of the number of working hours alone would

Dress Trade



Cloak Trade



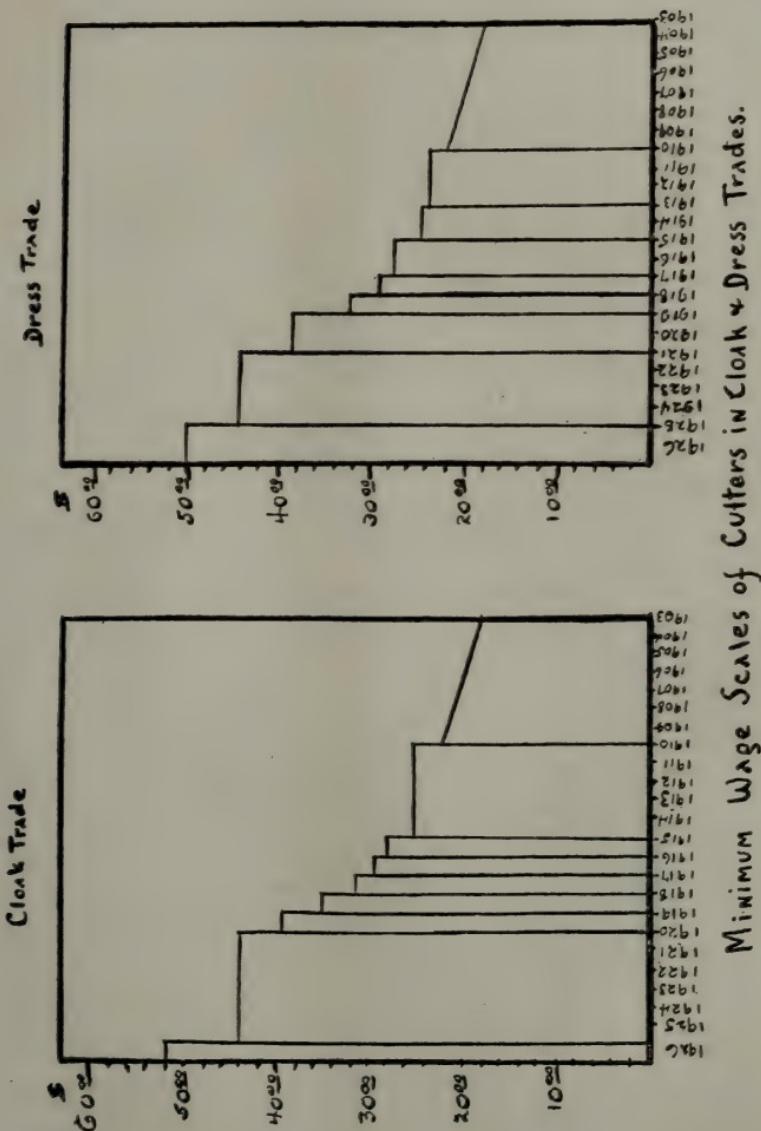
Working Hours per Week in the Cloak & Dress Industries.

amount to a wage increase of about 40% for an hour's work. The wages, however, did not remain stationary; on the contrary, they have moved upward much speedier than the hours of work have moved downward. This may be seen from the accompanying table of minimum wage scales since the beginning of the organization. It must be noted that the minimum scale for the time prior to 1910, as shown in the table, is only an estimate, for while there is evidence that in a number of places the scale was \$24.00, there is also evidence that in a large number of shops the scales were \$20.00, \$18.00, and even lower.

Year	<i>Minimum Wage Scales</i>	
	<i>Cloak</i>	<i>Dress</i>
	<i>Trade</i>	<i>Trade</i>
Before 1910	\$22.00	\$22.00
1910	25.00	24.00
1911	25.00	24.00
1912	25.00	24.00
1913	25.00	25.00
1914	25.00	25.00
1915	27.50	27.50
1916	29.00	27.50
1917	31.00	29.00
1918	31.00	29.00
1919	39.00	38.00
1920	44.00	38.00
1921	44.00	44.00
1922	44.00	44.00
1923	44.00	44.00
1924	44.00	44.00
1925	44.00	50.00
1926	52.00	50.00

A glance at this table will show that the minimum scales of the cutters have increased over 136% during the life of

the Union. In picture form this increase is shown in the two charts presented below:



WAGES OF CUTTERS

The minimum wage scales are a sufficient indication of the progress made by the Cutters' Union, but they do not show the actual wages of the cutters. The actual wages that the Cutters' Union has been able to maintain for its members in the face of adverse conditions in the industry, as well as in the general organization of the workers, are considerably higher than the scales, according to the investigation made by the Bureau of Research of the Cloak and Suit Industry.* The average wage of the cutters in the cloak and suit industry for 1925 was \$55.59, that is, \$11.59 or 26% above the scale.

In this connection, it is of interest to point out that 97% of all the cutters received rates of wages higher than the minimum. According to the Research Bureau, there were in 1925:

	<i>Under the Scale</i>	<i>At the Scale</i>	<i>Above the Scale</i>
	%	%	%
Cutters	1.5	1.8	96.7
Operators	11.6	20.5	67.9
Pressers	8.8	2.9	88.3
Finishers	36.5	20.2	43.2

These figures show that of all the important New York locals of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, the cutters' local has the greatest percentage of its members who received wages above the minimum scale. In fact, it may be said that practically all the members of Local 10 are paid higher than the scale because the few cutters who received wages at or below the scale do so for special reasons such as, old age, et cetera, and by special arrange-

**Wages and Wage Scales, 1925*, by Morris Kolchin. Bureau of Research of the Cloak, Suit and Skirt Industry of New York City. The Bureau was organized in 1925 by decision of the Governor's Advisory Commission.

ment. Of course, this raising of the wages and maintaining them was not the work of a day but required and still requires the constant vigilance of the administration. As is shown by the table following, as recently as 1921 there were only 93% of the cutters in the cloak trade whose wages were above the scale.

Cutters receiving	<i>Below</i>	<i>at</i>	<i>and above scale</i>
1921*	1.0	5.6	93.4
1924**	0.7	2.3	97.0
1925***	1.5	1.8	96.7

It is of interest to compare this successful effort of the Cutters' Union to raise wages of the underpaid members with the work of other locals in the same direction.

Workers receiving wages above the scale

	Cutters	Pressers	Operators	Finishers
1921*	93.4	97.1	86.0	80.0
1924**	97.0	90.9	70.3	47.3
1925***	96.7	88.3	67.9	43.2

Another point of interest is that the decline in the number of members who received wages above the scale in the three locals besides Local 10 coincides with the time that internal friction had developed in those locals. In Local 9, the proportion of higher paid members decreased from 80% to 43.2%; in Local 2 from 86% to 67.9%; and in Local 35, which held together much longer, a decrease was from 97.1% in 1921 to 88.3% in 1925. On the other hand, the cutters' local, which remained intact and continued to trans-

*Investigation made by the Union in 1921.

**Governor's Advisory Commission, Cloak, Suit and Skirt Industry, New York City. Report of an Investigation by John Dickinson and Morris Kolchin.

****Wages and Wage Scales, 1925*, by Morris Kolchin. Bureau of Research of the Cloak, Suit and Skirt Industry of New York City.

act its business without friction has practically no underpaid members, no members who receive wages below the scale.

The wages of the cutters, unlike any other craft, have been rising steadily. It is regrettable that there is no authentic information regarding wages in the dress industry, but the steady movement of wages in the cloak and suit industry may be seen from the following table:

Average Weekly Wages of Cutters

1901-1910*	.....	\$18.00
1913**	.....	\$24.36
1921***	.....	\$53.80
1924****	.....	\$55.28
1925*****	.....	\$55.80

If the wage scales, as shown before, have increased 136% during the quarter of a century, the life of the Cutters' Union, the actual weekly wages have increased still more. The table presented above shows an increase of 210% which is the same as saying that for every dollar of wages received before the organization of the Union, the cutters were receiving, in 1925, \$3.10.

Of course, since 1925 the wages of workers in the cloak trade have increased considerably, for it must be remembered

*Statement of A. Rosenberg, President, International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union before U. S. Commission On Industrial Relations, January 15, 1914. Final Report, Volume 2, page 1028.

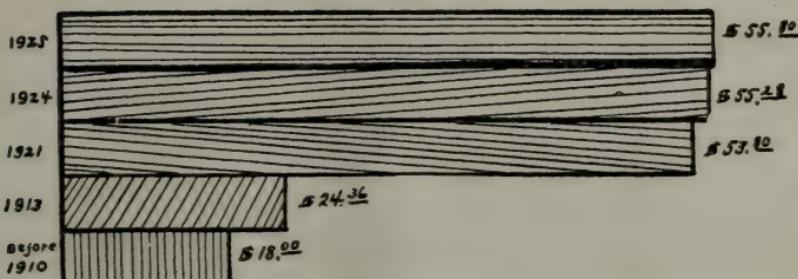
**U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 147, *Wages and Regularity of Employment in the Cloak, Suit and Skirt Industry*.

***Investigation made by the Union in 1921.

****Governor's Advisory Commission, Cloak, Suit and Skirt Industry, New York City. *Report of An Investigation* by John Dickinson and Morris Kolchin.

******Wages and Wage Scales*, 1925, by Morris Kolchin, Bureau of Research, Cloak, Suit and Skirt Industry, New York City.

that in addition to the raise of the scale to \$52.00 from \$44.00, which in itself has affected the wages of the cutters, there were actual increases in their wages of \$3.00 in the Industrial Council shops and of \$3.00 and \$5.00 in the



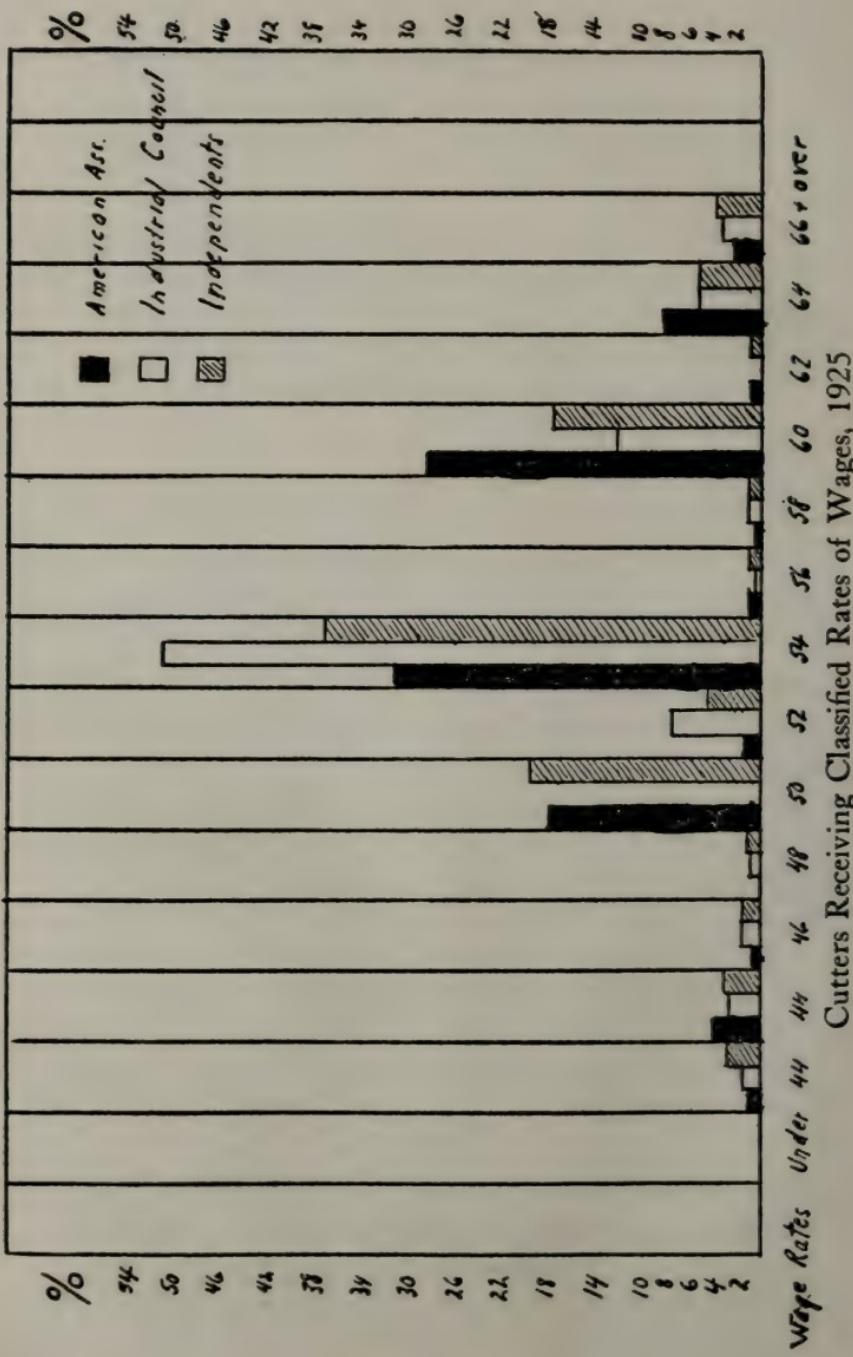
Average Weekly Wages of Cutters in the Cloak & Suit Industry.

American and Independent shops. And it is fair to assume that the average wage of the cutters, instead of \$55.80, as was the case in 1925, now is at least \$60.00 per week.

The accompanying table presents a comparison of the average wages of the several important crafts in the cloak trade in 1925 as found by the Bureau of Research.

Cutters	\$55.59
Operators	\$56.01
Pressers	\$51.01
Finishers	\$40.66

Remembering the recent increase of \$3.00 and \$5.00 obtained by the Union for the cutters, it may well be said that the wages of the cutters are now higher than those of any other craft in the industry, and again it must be pointed out the different direction in which the wages of the several im-



portant crafts of the industry have moved during the last few years, as may be seen from the following comparison:

	<i>Average Weekly Wages</i>	
	1921*	1925**
Cutters	\$53.80	\$55.80
Pressers	\$53.62	\$51.46
Operators	\$63.85	\$56.98
Finishers	\$47.31	\$41.23

During the five-year period (1921-1925), the average wage of the cutters has increased 3.7% while the wages of the pressers have decreased about 4.0%, the wages of the operators about 11.0%, and the wages of the finishers have decreased almost 13.0 per cent.

WHO ARE WE?

(A Study of the Composition of Our Membership)

So many statements have been made about us and our membership, praising and denouncing, exaggerating and belittling, that it was thought advisable for our twenty-fifth anniversary to make a special study of the composition of our Union and in this way to find out once and for all who the members of Local 10 are. For this purpose, a questionnaire was sent out to every member of the Union with a request to fill it out as soon as possible. The members were requested not to sign their names or in any other way to identify themselves so as to be entirely free to give correct answers to the questions propounded. It is regrettable that not all the replies could be used for the purpose of this study as quite a number of them came in after the tabulation had started. This study is based on answers to 723 questionnaires that came in time for tabulation.

*Investigation made by the Union in 1921. See Levine, *The Women's Garment Workers*, page 535.

***Wages and Wage Scales*, 1925, by Morris Kolchin.

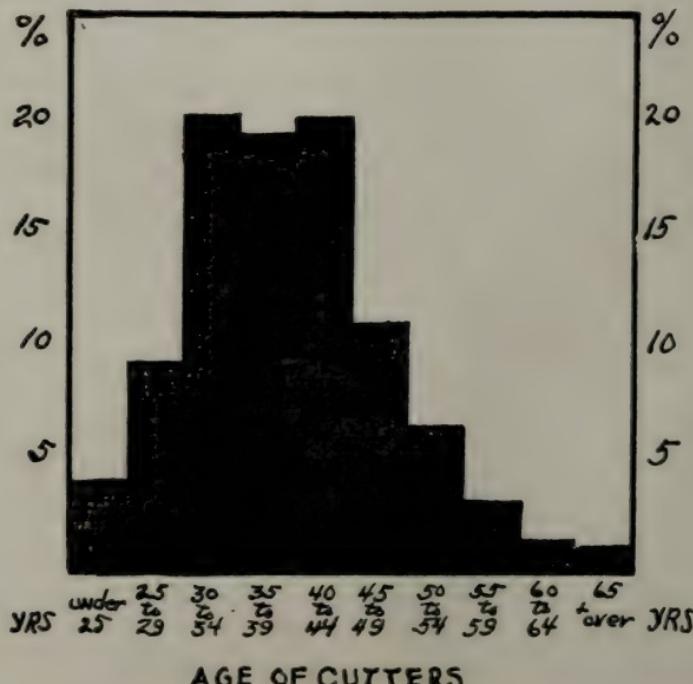
Age of Members

The ages of 723 cutters were classified and a summary is presented in the following table:

Age of Cutters

Years	%	Years	%
Under 25	4.15	45 to 49	12.45
25 to 29	9.54	50 to 54	6.78
30 to 34	20.48	55 to 59	3.46
35 to 39	19.77	60 to 64	1.66
40 to 44	20.19	65 and over	1.52

It may be observed that practically three-quarters of the membership are between 30 and 50 years old. There are less than 14% under 30 and about the same percentage who are over 50 years. In other words, the Cutters' Union consists not of youngsters and not of people of old age, but of mature men in the prime of life.

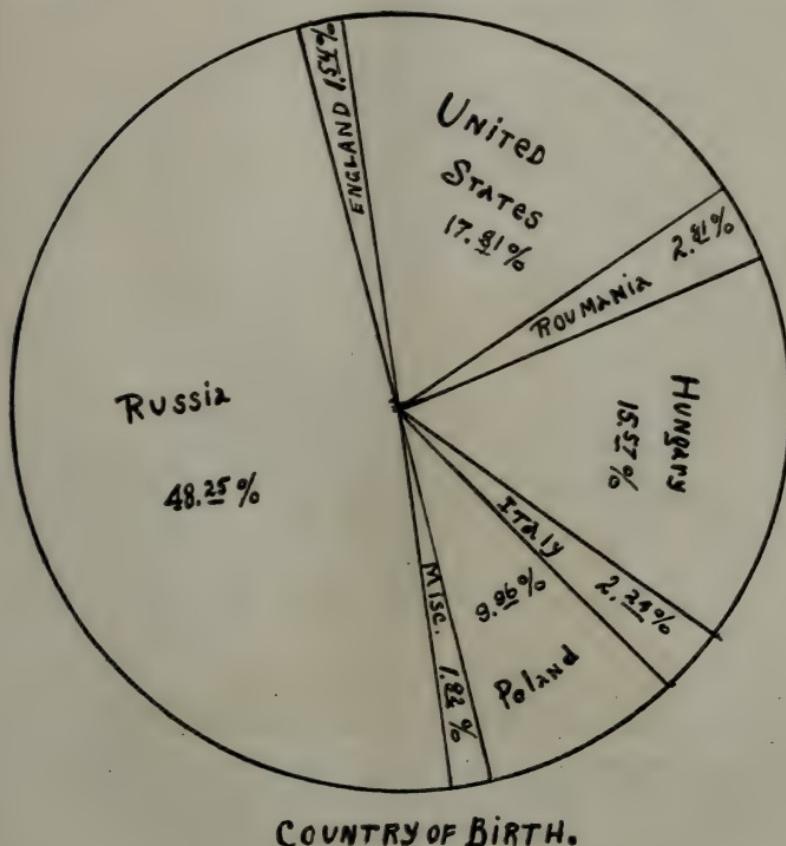


The Cutters and Citizenship

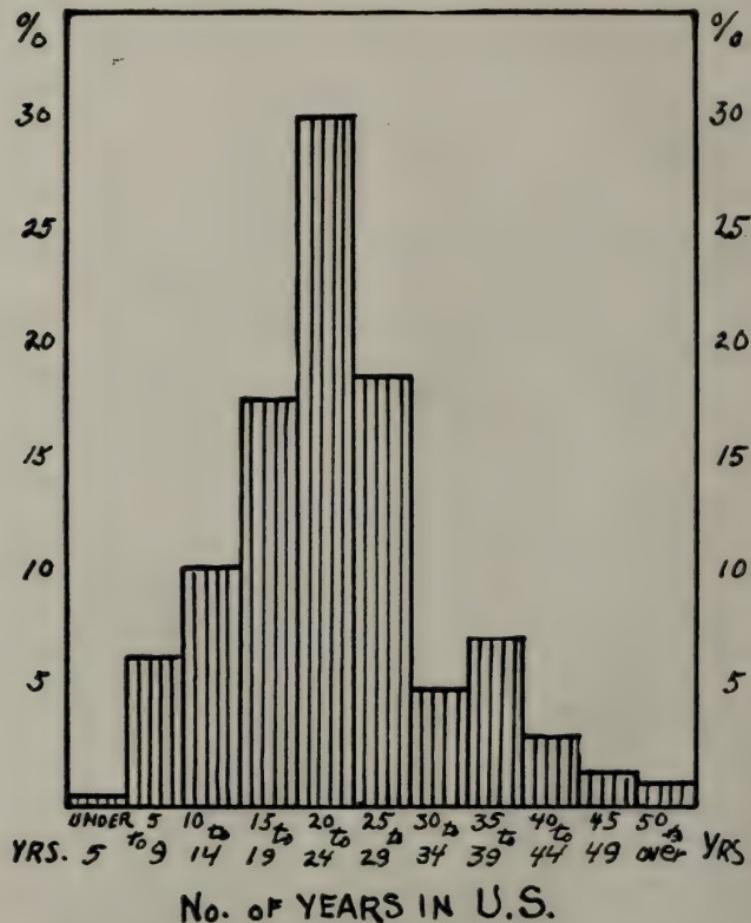
The majority of the members of the Cutters' Union, over 80%, are foreign born. Almost half of the membership, that is, 48.25%, were born in Russia, 15.5% were born in Austria-Hungary, and about 10% in Poland. A detailed composition of the membership as to the country of birth may be obtained from the accompanying table:

Birthplace

Country	%	Country	%
U. S. A.	17.81	Italy	2.24
Russia	48.25	England	1.54
Austria-Hungary	15.57	Roumania	2.81
Poland	9.96	Other Countries	1.82



About 65% of the foreign born members have been in this country from 15 to 30 years. Only 17.5% of the members have been here less than 15 years, and as many as 17%

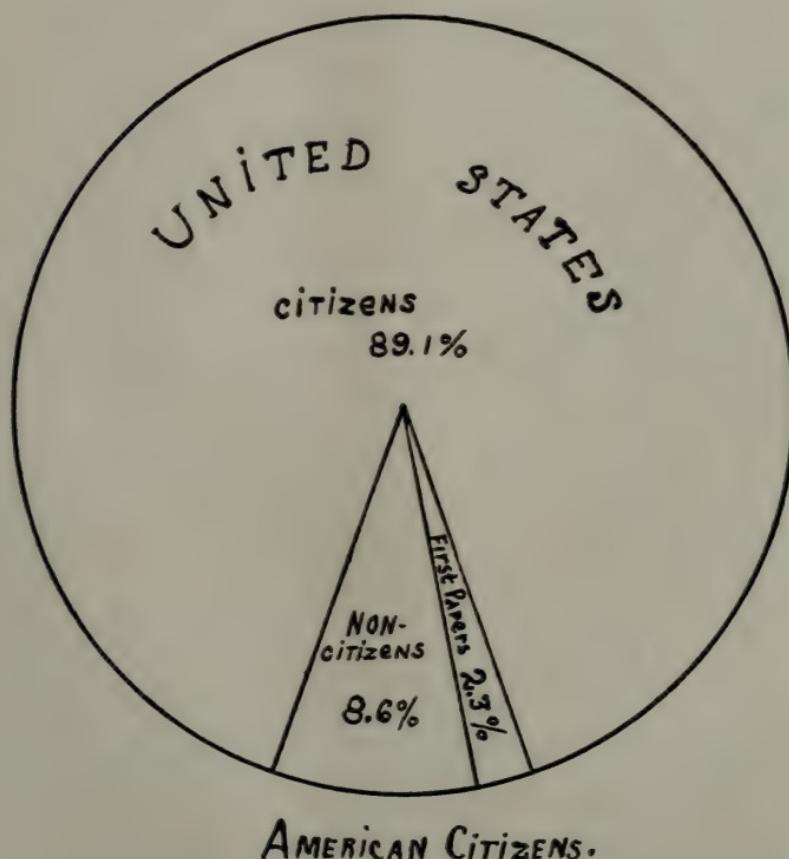


of the members have been in this country more than 30 years. If anything, these figures show that the foreign born members of the Union are pretty well Americanized.

How Long in This Country

<i>Years</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Years</i>	<i>%</i>
Under 5 .....	.50	25 to 29	16.44
5 to 9	6.54	30 to 34	5.03
10 to 14	10.40	35 to 39	7.21
15 to 19	17.81	40 to 44	3.20
20 to 24	30.37	45 to 49	1.51
		50 and over	1.00

As shown by the accompanying chart, practically 90% of the membership of the Union are citizens of the United

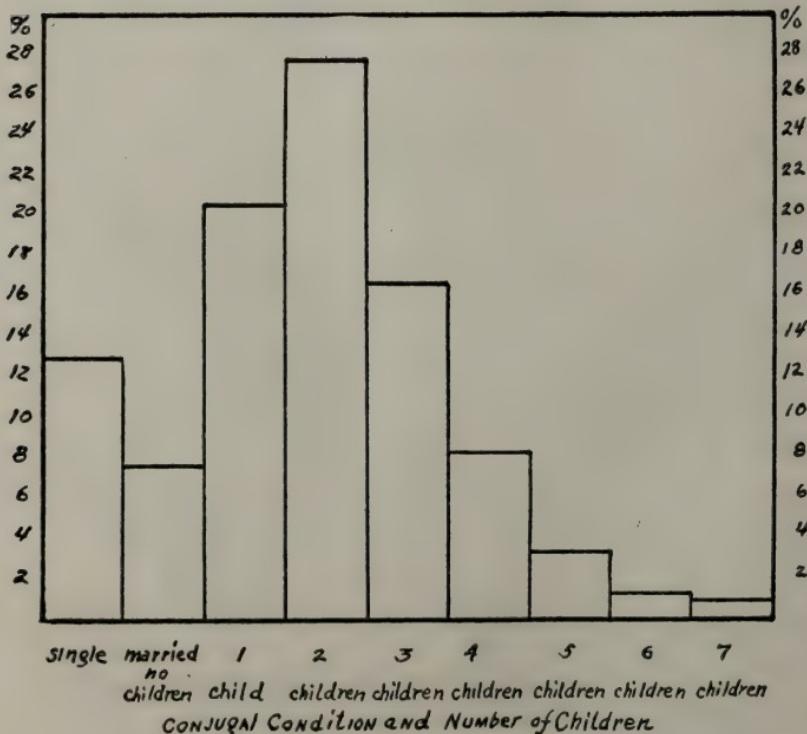


States. Only 8.6% of the members that replied to the questionnaires were found to be non-citizens, and 2.3% have already obtained their first papers.

The Cutters and Their Dependents

Of the 720 cutters that have answered this part of the questionnaire, 617, that is, 85.69%, were married, less than 1% were widowers, and only 13.34% were single, which shows that a preponderant majority of the cutters have family obligations. The extent of these obligations may be seen from the table and chart that follow:

Single	13.35	Married, 4 children.....	8.33
Married, no children.....	7.77	Married, 5 children.....	3.47
Married, 1 child	20.84	Married, 6 children.....	1.25
Married, 2 children.....	27.50	Married, 7 children.....	0.83
Married, 3 children.....	16.66		



A considerable portion of the cutters have large families to support. Practically one-third of the members have families with three and more children; about one-fifth are either single or married and have no children, and almost a half of the cutters have families with one or two children.

Seventy-seven per cent of the children are under 18 and 23% are 18 years old and over. In other words, only a small minority of the cutters have grown up children from whom, in case of need, they may expect assistance. However, cutters are, evidently, trying to keep their children in school even after the age of eighteen. Seventy-nine per cent of the children are attending school and 21% either work or are in business for themselves.

Cutters in the Trade and in the Union

Of the 723 cutters that answered the questionnaire, 449, or 62.1%, are in the cloak trade, 250, or 34.6%, in the dress trade, 22, or 3.0% in miscellaneous trades, and 2, did not specify the trade to which they belong.

The table that follows shows how long the cutters have been in the trade:

Number of Years in Trade

Years	%	Years	%
Under 5	3.10	25 to 29	11.71
5 to 9	10.30	30 to 34	4.94
10 to 14	20.31	35 to 39	2.67
15 to 19	21.87	40 and over	2.52
20 to 24	22.58		

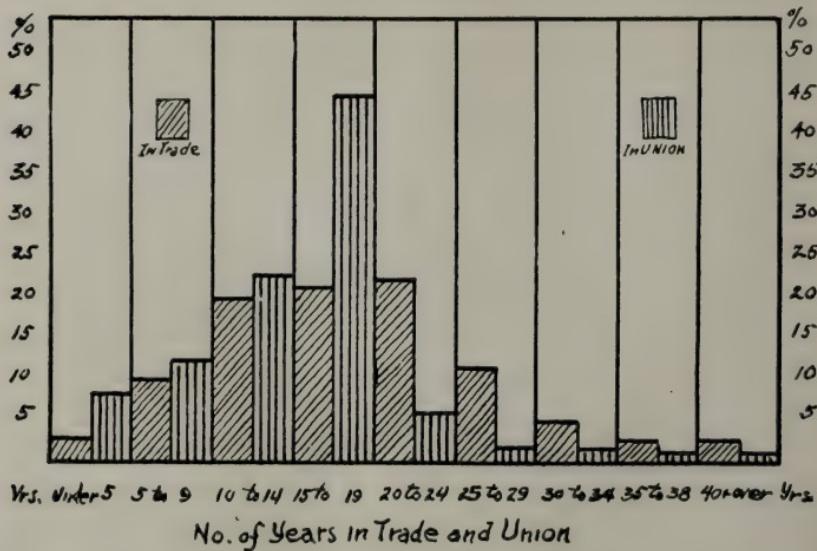
It is to be noticed that only 3% have been in the trade less than five years. The rest of the cutters have been working in the trade more than five years. Practically 20% have spent thirty years and more in the industry.

The next table shows the percentages of cutters who have been in the Union a specified number of years.

Number of Years in Union

Years	%	Years	%
Under 5	8.20	25 to 29	1.84
5 to 9	12.73	30 to 34	1.12
10 to 14	23.23	35 to 39	.98
15 to 19	45.13	40 and over	.84
20 to 24	5.93		

Quite conspicuous is the period of 1910, that is, the group that has been in the Union from 15 to 19 years. Almost



half of the members have joined the Union during that period. There are, however, a number of people, almost 5%, who have been members of the Union for more than twenty-five years, evidently members of the various organizations that preceded the present Cutters' Union.

In summing up the information obtained through this study, it may be said that:

1. The cutters, who compose Local 10, are not boisterous youngsters or superannuated pensioners as they are represented at one time or another, depending on the need of their enemies. They are mature men in the prime of life.
2. While the majority of the cutters are of foreign birth, the members of the Union are almost all, with very few exceptions, American citizens.
3. An overwhelming majority of the cutters have family responsibilities and very few have grown up children from whom they may expect assistance.
4. There are very few newcomers in the trade. The majority of the cutters have had many years of experience as craftsmen and as members of the organization.

APPENDIX II

CUTTERS RECEIVING CLASSIFIED RATES OF WAGES, 1925*

	Under \$30.00.....	American		Industrial Council		Independent	
		No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
\$30.00 and 31.00.....	1	0.1		1	0.2	1	0.2
32.00 "	33.00.....	....	....	....	....	3	0.6
34.00 "	35.00.....	1	0.1	1	0.2	3	0.6
36.00 "	37.00.....	....	....	1	0.2	....	....
38.00 "	39.00.....	1	0.1	1	0.2	1	0.2
40.00 "	41.00.....	4	0.5	4	0.7	6	1.2
42.00 "	43.00.....	1	0.1	....	....	....	....
44.00 "	45.00.....	36	4.2	18	2.7	17	3.4
46.00 "	47.00.....	4	0.5	10	1.5	7	1.4
48.00 "	49.00.....	1	0.1	5	0.7	6	1.1
50.00 "	51.00.....	157	18.4	80	12.0	98	19.8
52.00 "	53.00.....	14	1.6	52	7.8	22	4.5
54.00 "	55.00.....	268	31.4	340	51.3	183	37.0
56.00 "	57.00.....	10	1.2	3	0.4	7	1.4
58.00 "	59.00.....	3	0.4	7	1.1	5	1.1
60.00 "	61.00.....	246	28.8	83	12.4	87	17.6
62.00 "	63.00.....	7	0.8	....	....	4	0.8
64.00 "	65.00.....	74	8.7	36	5.4	26	5.3
66.00 "	67.00.....	2	0.2	1	0.2	....	....
68.00 "	69.00.....	....	....	....	....	....	....
70.00 "	71.00.....	19	2.1	7	1.1	14	2.9
72.00 "	73.00.....	....	....	1	0.2	....	....
74.00 "	75.00.....	5	0.7	8	1.2	1	0.2
76.00 "	77.00.....	....	....	....	....	....	....
78.00 "	79.00.....	....	....	....	....	....	....
80.00 "	over.....	....	....	3	0.5	4	0.6
Total	854	100.0	662	100.0	495	100.0	

*Wages and Wage Scales, 1925, by Morris Kolchin, Bureau of Research.

APPENDIX III

CUMULATIVE PERCENT OF CUTTERS
RECEIVING CLASSIFIED RATES OF
WAGES, 1925*

Classified Wage Rates	American Cumulative Percent	Industrial Council Cumulative Percent	Independent Cumulative Percent
Under \$30.00	0.1	.....	0.2
" 32.00	0.1	0.2	0.2
" 34.00	0.1	0.2	0.2
" 36.00	0.1	0.2	0.8
" 38.00	0.2	0.4	1.4
" 40.00	0.2	0.6	1.4
" 42.00	0.3	0.8	1.6
" 44.00	0.8	1.5	2.8
" 46.00	0.9	1.5	2.8
" 48.00	5.1	4.2	6.2
" 50.00	5.6	5.7	7.6
" 52.00	5.7	6.4	8.7
" 54.00	24.1	18.4	28.5
" 56.00	25.7	26.2	33.0
" 58.00	57.1	77.5	70.0
" 60.00	58.3	77.9	71.4
" 62.00	58.7	79.0	72.5
" 64.00	87.5	91.4	90.1
" 66.00	88.3	91.4	90.9
" 68.00	97.0	96.8	96.2
" 70.00	97.2	97.0	96.2
" 72.00	99.3	97.0	96.2
" 74.00	100.0	98.1	99.0
" 76.00	....	98.3	99.0
" 78.00	....	99.5	99.2
" 80.00	....	99.5	99.2

**Wages and Wage Scales, 1925*, by Morris Kolchin, Bureau of Research.

APPENDIX IV

Statement of Receipts and Disbursements,
Local 10, I. L. G. W. U., January 1 to December 31, 1925.

RECEIPTS

Dues	\$75,783.10
Books	130.25
Sanitarium Assessment	2,875.50
1922 Convention Assessment.....	1,309.00
Chicago Strike Assessment.....	194.50
1922 Waist and Dress Million Dollar Fund	955.00
Second Million Dollar Fund..	1,520.00
Initiation Fees	30,040.80
Fines	6,601.99
Lost Book Charges	77.00
Wages Collected for Members	2,164.20
Medical Fees	884.00
Ball Tax	1,999.00
Ball Tickets	508.50
Interest:	
Check and Savings a/c's	\$267.33
Bonds	1,592.50
Loans	975.00
	<hr/>
Refunds	154.90
Manager Dubinsky Testimon- ial Dinner	695.00
Miscellaneous Income	5.80
Exchange	8,126.25
From Members on a/c Sub- scriptions to I. U. Bank Shares	1,337.00
Relief Fund	829.00
Securities Received from Members	2,995.00
Loan Returned by Local 48....	5,000.00
Notes Payable—Int'l. Union Bank	6,000.00
Withdrawn from Savings.....	27,000.00
	<hr/>
Total Receipts	\$180,020.62

DISBURSEMENTS

Dues to International.....	\$24,250.00
1925 Assessment to Int'l.....	3,000.00
Joint Board—Proportion of Expense	33,384.05
Dues to District Council.....	164.50
Dues to Other Organizations.....	107.50 \$60,906.05

Salaries	27,330.42
Rent—Office	3,000.00
Printing	927.65
Stationery	553.58
Postage	803.50
Towel Supply	23.10
Electric Supply	171.89
Telephones and Telegrams.....	990.39
Clippings	103.95
Water and Ice.....	91.00
Supplies from International..	45.00
Cleaning	160.00
Insurance	49.35
Bond Premium	100.00
Histories (International)	264.00
Repairs	184.40
Furniture and Fixtures.....	67.50
Interest on Loan	90.00
Miscellaneous: Office Exp. and Supplies	540.83 35,496.56

Services Rendered (Control- ling Investigators, Com- mittees, etc.)	6,478.35
Hall Rent	649.75
Advertising	296.30
Printing	203.25
Organization Expenses	3,966.00
Relief—Executive Board	1,500.00
Salaries of Local Officers.....	360.00
Legal Services	275.00
Miscellaneous	927.54 14,656.19

Committees

Executive Board	2,332.00
Examination	310.00
Joint Board Delegates.....	390.00
Judiciary	58.00
Membership	92.00
Delegates to District Council	10.50
Delegates to Central Trades	56.00
Delegates to Unity House	204.50
Convention Expenses	2,895.10
Elections	494.21
Miscellaneous	96.83
	<hr/>
	6,939.14

Donations to Organiza-

tions	400.75
Tickets and Ads.	352.15
Gifts, Christmas	350.00
Tuberculosis Benefit	1,425.00
Death Benefit	725.00
Extra Strike Benefit.....	2,475.00
	<hr/>
	5,727.90

Refunds

Deposit on Hall—1926 Ball....	1,987.30
Medical Fees (Union Health Center)	25.00
I. U. Bank Shares for Members	581.80
Relief Fund	1,922.00
Back Pay—Paid Out.....	1,714.80
Furniture and Fixtures.....	2,019.81
Manager Dubinsky Testi- monial Dinner—Expense	98.10
Ball Expense—1925	1,182.00
Interest Deposited in Savings a/c	1,186.80
Union Label Stores — 10 shares	202.70
Exchange	50.00
Loans receivable—given	9,726.25
	<hr/>
	10,202.50

Securities returned	2,300.00
Joint Board—Revolving Fund	7,000.00
Notes Payable—Int'l. Union	
Bank	11,000.00
Deposited in Savings—Int'l.	
Union Bank	796.25

Total Disbursements	\$175,721.15

Owing to the strike in 1926, no audit could be made for that year in time for inclusion in this Appendix and the year 1925 is cited instead.

APPENDIX VI

BIOGRAPHIES OF CONSPICUOUS CUTTERS

PHILIP ANSEL.—Joined Local 10 in 1910. Born in Russia in 1885 and came to the United States in 1908. Has served the local in many responsible official positions, including President of the local, Executive Board member, Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the board, delegate to conventions of the International in 1922, 1923, 1924 and 1925, delegate to the Central Federated Union, Business Agent for the Joint Board, Chairman of Board of Directors of the Joint Board Skirt, Suit and Dress Makers' Union, 1924.

JULIUS BENDER.—Joined Gotham in 1891 and has been an active union cutter since that year. Born in the United States in 1869. Served one term as Business Agent of Local 10 and was delegate to the Joint Board for four years.

HARRY BERLIN.—Joined Local 10 in 1914. Born in Russia in 1883 and came to the United States in 1904. Had been active as a Socialist and Zionist in Russia and the Clerks Union. Has served Local 10 in various capacities, including President, member of the Executive Board, delegate to the Joint Board, delegate to conventions of the International in 1918, 1920 and 1922, and delegate to A. F. of L. conventions in 1920 and 1921. Berlin was also Chairman of the waist and dress strike committee in 1919, Chairman of the General Strike Committee in the waist and dress strike of 1921, Chairman of the Picket Committee of the waist and dress strike in 1923, and Chairman of the Joint Board of the Waist and Dress Union. Suspended in 1927 for defiance of the rules of Local 10 and for "left" activities.

JESSE P. COHEN.—One of the organizers of the United Cloak and Suit Cutters' Association in 1901. Was also a member of Gotham. Born in the United States in 1878. One of the most untiring members in the work of establishing the cutters as a strong union. He has served the union in many responsible positions, including Business Manager, President, Vice-President and Secretary. Delegate to the Central Federated Union five years, the Label

APPENDIX V

COMPARATIVE STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS

Local 10, I. L. G. W. U., 1916*-1925

<i>Receipts</i>	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	Total
Dues	\$41,761.10	\$44,867.75	\$48,281.05	\$61,291.80	\$62,591.20	\$77,726.90	\$70,663.05	\$71,263.50	\$83,664.35	\$75,783.10	\$637,893.80
Assessments	8,180.95	1,625.68	3,657.30	67,825.96	40,789.50	36,658.00	67,381.00	40,234.75	15,526.50	6,854.00	288,733.64
Fines	2,093.24	5,532.04	5,340.83	4,493.56	5,861.58	2,641.35	4,646.00	10,695.55	10,444.99	6,601.99	58,352.13
Wages collected for members	3,369.37	6,080.72	7,125.77	7,840.01	11,349.05	558.85	1,727.09	2,580.21	4,792.79	2,164.20	47,588.06
Initiation and Reinstatement Fees	34,541.84	15,852.02	16,184.56	43,763.65	17,357.43	26,996.86	33,370.11	30,346.14	39,705.96	30,040.80	288,159.37
Other Receipts**	20,858.55	5,670.12	9,151.67	8,056.77	15,268.99	6,471.79	4,841.36	18,386.48	81,797.77	58,576.53	229,080.03
Total Receipts	110,805.05	79,628.33	89,741.18	193,271.75	153,217.75	151,053.75	182,628.61	173,506.63	235,932.36	180,020.62	1,549,806.03
<i>Disbursements</i>											
Per Capita to International	6,250.00	10,520.00	10,441.04	10,650.00	13,000.00	20,000.00	20,000.00	21,000.00	26,000.00	24,250.00	162,111.04
Assessments Paid Out	20,192.00		3,800.00	15,328.00	4,722.00	49,039.50	40,351.50	11,920.00	26,306.50	3,000.00	174,659.50
Dues and Donations to Other Org.	285.25	289.50	563.75	930.75	5,672.35	665.25	3,285.07	2,072.70	1,673.73	860.40	16,298.75
Joint Board Expense	2,175.00	4,946.00	5,700.00	5,200.00	3,500.00	34,711.57	42,303.43	52,365.25	54,543.79	33,384.05	238,829.09
Donations and Benefits to Members	2,358.50	1,499.00	2,122.00	1,267.00	7,466.00	5,935.50	5,727.00	3,894.00	4,775.00	6,339.80	41,383.80
Wages Collected for Members—Paid Out	3,366.94	6,080.67	7,009.24	7,647.55	11,348.77	514.85	1,727.09	2,571.21	4,487.79	2,019.81	46,773.92
Salaries of Officers, Office, Controllers, Investigators, Services Rendered and Committees	26,187.34	30,673.18	31,708.72	40,980.11	45,614.95	23,741.90	20,572.98	30,595.56	32,419.91	33,308.77	315,803.42
Other Disbursement**	46,041.76	26,030.73	32,477.75	89,312.82	64,499.44	33,302.54	28,164.77	73,139.85	88,999.68	72,558.32	554,527.66
Total Disbursements	\$106,856.79	\$80,039.08	\$93,822.50	\$171,316.23	\$155,823.51	\$167,911.11	\$162,131.84	\$197,558.57	\$239,206.40	\$175,721.15	\$1,550,387.18

*No authentic detail figures could be obtained for the years 1910 to 1915. Totals from reports are as follows: Total receipts from January 1, 1910, to December 31, 1915, \$289,218.19, an average of \$48,203.03 per annum. Total disbursements, same period, \$268,644.92, an average of \$44,774.15 per annum.

**The items comprising these totals include Loans, Notes, Purchases of Investments, Exchanges, and all other receipts and disbursements not shown. For example, of the items included in these totals see 1925 detailed annual report.

COMPARATIVE BALANCE SHEET—Local 10, I. L. G. W. U.—1916-1925

<i>Assets</i>	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925
Cash	\$8,754.94	\$8,233.28	\$10,226.74	\$43,160.23	\$48,630.20	\$32,796.52	\$54,365.01	\$43,261.07	\$26,346.89	\$4,945.32
Bonds, Stocks and Investments			1,307.00	1,107.00	7,085.00	7,085.00	11,085.00	51,085.00	48,685.00	48,735.00
Loans	6,825.00	6,125.00	2,825.00	2,725.00	8,600.00	18,700.00	3,075.00	1,325.00	10,425.50	23,433.00
Furniture and Supplies	1,927.92	1,954.55	1,878.86	1,600.71	1,655.78	2,389.34	4,120.60	4,317.36	7,769.88	7,074.87
Joint Board Revolving Fund										7,000.00
Total Assets	\$17,507.86	\$16,312.83	\$16,237.60	\$48,592.94	\$65,970.98	\$60,970.86	\$72,645.61	\$99,988.43	\$93,227.27	\$91,188.19

Liabilities—The local's liabilities are amounts due to the International and Joint Board. These items are not shown here as they are due from members (and also not included as assets).

The first audit made by the official accountants of the International covered a period from 1910 to 1915 and proved that the financial affairs and records of Local 10 were in a chaotic state. Since 1916 the books and records of Local 10 have been regularly audited by the official accountants of the International and found to be accurate and in perfect order. The office of Local 10 has represented, especially during the past few years, a model of efficiency in local unions.

F. NATHAN WOLF,
General Auditor I. L. G. W. U.

League three years, Joint Board five years and Miscellaneous Trades two years. Now out of the trade.

DAVID DUBINSKY.—Born in Brest-Litovsk, Poland, February 22, 1892. Migrated at the age of three to Lodz, Poland. Attended the public elementary school in Poland and graduated from the Zionist School. His father was a baker and at the age of 14 Dubinsky began working for his father, at the same time joining the Bakers' Union of Lodz, Poland. He became active in a strike conducted by the union, striking against his father, and was arrested in 1907 after which he was forced to leave the town. In 1908 when Dubinsky was 16 years old a general strike of the bakers was called and, as assistant secretary of the Bakers' Union, he was again arrested. He served 18 months in prison and was exiled to Siberia in 1909. Five months later he escaped. In January, 1911, he came to the United States where he became a knee pants operator, then a dishwasher and, finally, a ladies' garment cutter. On July 3, 1911, he was initiated as a member of Local 10. Due to the rule that a man must be in the trade three years before being admitted to membership in the union, he encountered great difficulty before being admitted to Local 10. He brought a letter of recommendation to Jesse Cohen, then Manager, from Benjamin Schlesinger, Abraham Rosenberg and Sol Metz, which was due to the efforts of his brother, who was then a business agent of the Bakers' Union, Local 100. Aside from this extraordinary "pull," other methods were employed to obtain his admission to the union. He became a member of the Executive Board of Local 10 in 1919 and in 1920 was elected Vice-President. In 1921 he was elected President and in 1922 General Manager, a position created after merging the offices of the three divisions, later Manager-Secretary, thereby eliminating the offices of two secretaries. The position of Manager-Secretary was formerly held by three branch managers and two secretaries, one recording and the other financial. This position is still held by Dubinsky. He was also a delegate to conventions of the International in 1920, 1922 and 1924, and the special convention of 1925. He was elected Vice-President of the International at the convention of 1922 and was re-elected by the conventions of 1924 and 1925 and still holds this office. He was a delegate to the convention of the Jewish Socialist Federation in Boston in 1919 when the first "split" between "lefts" and "rights" occurred and in this convention he was an uncompromising "right." He was appointed delegate to the convention of the American Fed-

eration of Labor which met in Atlantic City in 1925 and was active in the cooperative movement down to 1920. Prior to 1911 he was a member of the Bund and the Social Democratic Party of Poland.

ISADORE EPSTEIN.—Joined the United Cloak and Suit Cutters' Association in 1901. Born in the United States in 1884. Served Local 10 in many official capacities from 1910 to 1919, including President, Chairman of the Executive Board, secretary of the board, Business Agent, Editor the *Ladies' Garment Cutter*, special organizer, delegate to the Central Federated Union, State Federation of Labor, the Joint Board and to the Toronto, New York, Cleveland, Philadelphia and Boston conventions of the International. Expelled by Local 10, unjustly he claims, in 1919 together with Samuel Martin, John F. Pierce and Edward Fine. (See Chapter XII.)

MAX GORENSTEIN.—Joined Local 6 in 1906. Born in Russia in 1886 where he became active in the Socialist Revolutionary Party. Member of the Workmen's Circle. Elected General Manager of Local 10 a number of times and delegate to the A. F. of L. conventions in 1916, 1917, 1918 and 1919.

HARRIS HACKEN.—Born in Austria, December 17, 1880, and came to the United States in 1903. Admitted to Local 10 in 1910 and has also been a member of Local 30. He has served nearly five years in a number of important offices, including delegate to the District Council in 1911 and as a member of the Executive Board. He was also elected a delegate to the Boston convention of the International in 1918.

MAURICE W. JACOBS.—Now President of Local 10. Born in Russia, March 8, 1894, and came to the United States in 1912. He joined Local 10 in 1915 and has also been a member of the Philadelphia cutters union, Local 53. He has served Local 10 in a number of official capacities, including Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Executive Board, Vice-President and now President. He served three consecutive years as Vice-President, two years as Vice-Chairman, and two years as Chairman of the Executive Board. He was also elected as delegate to the special convention of the International in 1925.

MORTIMER JULIAN.—Born in the United States in 1869. He joined the Gotham Knife Cutters' Association in 1886 and the United Cloak and Suit Cutters' Association when it was revived

in 1901. He served as a member of the Executive Board of Local 6 for two terms and was a delegate to the convention of the International in 1907 where he was elected President. He helped to organize a district council and was secretary of that body. Julian also served on many committees of the union. Now out of the trade.

MAX MARGULIES.—Joined Local 10 in 1910. Born in Austria in 1892 and came to the United States in 1905. Once very active member, now in the cloak business. Has served as Executive Board member, President, Business Agent, delegate to the Joint Board, to the Central Federated Union, and once to a convention of the International. Has also served on picket committees and various strike committees.

JAMES McCUALEY.—Joined the Gotham Knife Cutters in 1889. Born in the United States in 1866. He helped to revive and organize the United Cloak and Suit Cutters' Association in 1901 and in December was elected President. At a later period he also served as President and Vice-President of Local 6. Delegate to conventions of the International in 1902, 1903, 1904, 1905 and 1910. Was elected President of the International at the Boston convention in 1904.

CHARLES NAGEL.—Joined the Gotham Knife Cutters in 1888. Of German descent, he was born in the United States in 1866. Nagel has served Local 10 in many official capacities, including five years as Business Manager, two years on the Examining Board, and ten years on the Executive Committee. He was also a delegate to the International in 1912. One of his most arduous experiences was in the strike of 1910 when he picketed practically night and day for three weeks.

ISIDORE NAGLER.—Joined Local 10 in 1911. Born in Austria in 1895 and came to the United States in 1909. Served as Business Agent from 1920 to and including 1926. Has also served as Executive Board member, Recording Secretary of the board, delegate to the Central Trades and Labor Council, to three conventions of the International and as delegate to A. F. of L. conventions for 1926 and 1927. Gave active service frequently on numerous and important strike committees. Manager Industrial Council Association Department of the Joint Board, I. L. G. W. U.

MICHAEL ONDUSKO.—A member of Gotham which he joined in 1890 and joined Local 6 in 1904. Born in Hungary in 1870 and

came to the United States in 1882. Very active member, served several years in official positions, including President, Vice-President and board member of Local 10.

SAMUEL PERLMUTTER.—Joined Local 10 in 1910. Born in Russia in 1894 and came to the United States in 1902. Member of the Socialist Party. Has been very active in every strike since 1910. Has been President of the local and Manager, Chairman of Executive Board, delegate to five conventions of the International and two A. F. of L. conventions, Vice-Chairman of the Joint Board, Cloak Makers' Union, member of Board of Directors of the Joint Board, and now Manager of the downtown office of the Joint Board. Manager Independent and American Association Department of the Joint Board, I. L. G. W. U.

ELMER ROSENBERG.—Joined Local 10 in 1909. Born in Hungary in 1885 and came to the United States in 1901. Was active in the labor movement of Hungary. He served as President and as Editor of the *Ladies' Garment Cutter* and General Secretary, serving in some official capacity from 1913 to 1919. He was never defeated for any position for which he accepted a nomination. He was a delegate to conventions of the International in 1913, 1914, 1915, 1916 and 1917 and to A. F. of L. conventions in 1914 and 1915. Rosenberg also introduced educational courses for the International, started the campaign for equal distribution of work for cutters, managed a strike of corset workers in Bridgeport, Conn., and a strike of cloakmakers in Montreal. Was elected to the State Legislature of New York in 1917 on the ticket of the Socialist Party from a district having a large number of needle trade workers.

JOHN C. RYAN.—Another "old timer" who joined the Gotham Knife Cutters in the late eighties. Born in the United States in 1861. Few men have served more often than Ryan in responsible official positions. He served four or five terms as President of Local 6 and as Chairman of the Executive Committee, President of Local 10 in 1913 and 1915, delegate to the Joint Board a number of times, and delegate to International conventions in 1903, 1904, 1905, 1906, 1907, 1908, 1912 ("some in between," he writes) 1920, 1922 and 1923. Has also served on important committees in a number of strikes.

CHARLES W. SERRINGTON.—Joined Gotham in 1886 and was one of the organizers of the United Cloak and Suit Cutters' Associa-

tion in 1901. Born in the United States in 1858. Has been a board member and member of other committees in each organization of cutters of which he was a member, including Local 10. Was treasurer of strike funds in the strikes of 1910, 1913 and 1916. Now honorary member of Local 10.

JOHN W. SETTLE.—A member of the Gotham Knife Cutters which he joined about 1892. Born in England in 1863. Emigrated to the United States in 1867. He has served as a member of executive committees frequently and for seven years served as Business Agent.

SAM B. SHENKER.—Joined Local 10 in 1912. Born in Turkey in 1892 and came to the United States in 1904. Member of the Socialist Party. Has served as Recording Secretary and Editor of the *Ladies' Garment Cutter*, delegate to the Central Federated Union, Business Agent and Manager of the Waist and Dress Branch, member of the Executive Board, and delegate to three conventions of the International. Assistant Manager of the local since June, 1917. Took an important part in the strike of the Cloakmakers in 1916 and every subsequent strike, especially in the waist and dress industry. Served on various committees of the local and in conventions of the International.

ANDREW J. SMITH.—In May, 1923, Andrew J. Smith, a member of Local 10, died in his sixty-eighth year. Smith was a member of the Gotham Knife Cutters, having joined it on October 24, 1884, and from that time to the period of his last illness he was active in promoting the organization of the cutters. In 1901, he was one of the cutters who helped to revive the United Cloak and Suit Cutters' Association. He served as President of Local 10 and served as a delegate to a number of conventions of the International. A special committee was appointed to attend the funeral of Smith which included four other "old timers." Because of his habit of frequently introducing resolutions, Smith came to be known as "Resolution Andy."

CHARLES STEIN.—Born in Russia in 1890 and came to the United States in 1906. Joined Local 10 in 1910. Had also been a member of a shirt cutters' union. Was manager and Business Agent of the Waist and Dress Division four terms, from 1916 to 1918. Was a delegate to the convention of the International in 1916. Had also served as Secretary of Sub-local 10, (assistants). Stein was a persistent advocate of admitting assistant cutters into Local 10, the principle of equal division of work for cutters, and contributed

to the organization of the Waist and Dress Division. He was among the active members of the new element identified with the modern policies of Local 10.

MAX STOLLER.—Born in Russian Poland, December 25, 1890. Was active in the revolutionary Anarchist movement in Russia in the period of 1905-1908 and then left for Paris and, later, London. Came to the United States in June, 1910, and began working as a waist cutter. Joined Local 10 in 1910 and for a time was also a member of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, Local 4. Served as member of the Executive Board in 1919, Business Agent in 1920, Chairman of the Executive Board in 1921-1922, and President in 1922. Was a delegate to the convention of the International in 1925. Helped to organize the dress makers in Chicago in 1917 and was a member of the Executive Board of Local 81, Chicago, that year. Was an active member of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers for three years.

APPENDIX VII

Officers of Local 6 and Local 10, 1901-1927

SEMI-ANNUAL ELECTIONS

LOCAL 6

- 1901: President, Alexander Bloch; Vice-President, William F. Ogden; Recording Secretary, Charles J. Ubelhor; Financial Secretary, Campbell Smith; Treasurer, Mitchell Treckman.
- 1902: President, James A. McCauley; Vice-President, William F. Ogden; Recording Secretary, Charles J. Ubelhor; Financial Secretary, Edward Blume; Treasurer, Mitchell Silverstein.
- 1902: President, James A. McCauley; Vice-President, William F. Ogden; Recording Secretary, Barney Levy; Financial Secretary, Edward Blume; Treasurer, Mitchel Silverstein.
- 1903: President, John C. Ryan; Vice-President, M. Weisberger; Recording Secretary, Barney Levy; Financial Secretary, J. E. Fruiesen; Treasurer, Charles W. Serrington.
- 1903: President, John C. Ryan; Vice-President, Edward Boqurt; Recording Secretary, Edward Leahy; Financial Secretary, J. E. Fruiesen; Treasurer, Charles W. Serrington.
- 1904: President, B. Lewis; Vice-President, Michael Ondusko; Recording Secretary, Jesse P. Cohen; Financial Secretary, J. E. Fruiesen; Treasurer, Charles W. Serrington.

1904: President, Nicholas Jagoe; Vice-President, Max Hyman; Recording Secretary, Jesse P. Cohen; Financial Secretary, J. E. Fruiesen; Treasurer, Charles W. Serrington.

1905: President, Max Hyman; Vice-President, Moritz M. Weissberger; Recording Secretary, Samuel Martin; Financial Secretary, J. E. Fruiesen; Treasurer, Charles W. Serrington.

1905: President, John C. Ryan; Vice-President, Samuel Martin; Recording Secretary, Jesse Greenberger; Financial Secretary, J. E. Fruiesen; Treasurer, Charles W. Serrington.

LOCAL 10

1906: President, John C. Ryan; Vice-President, John F. Pierce; Recording Secretary, Jesse Greenberger; Financial Secretary, Edward J. Fruiesen; Treasurer, Charles W. Serrington.

1906: President, James McCauley; Vice-President, Emil Lindenthal; Recording Secretary, Jesse Greenberger; Financial Secretary, Edward J. Fruiesen; Treasurer, Charles W. Serrington.

1907: President, Alexander Bloch; Vice-President, I. Nagel; Recording Secretary, Samuel Martin; Financial Secretary, Edward J. Fruiesen; Treasurer, Charles W. Serrington.

1907: President, Michael Ondusko; Vice-President, J. Mackusker; Recording Secretary, Nicholas Jagoe; Financial Secretary, Edward J. Fruiesen; Treasurer, Charles W. Serrington; Business Agent, Alexander Bloch.

1908: President, James McCauley; Vice-President, Murray Harris; Recording Secretary, J. Zimmerman; Financial Secretary, Edward J. Fruiesen; Treasurer, Sam Besser; Business Agent, Alexander Bloch.

1908: President, Jesse Cohen; Vice-President, M. Sonenshein; Recording Secretary, J. Zimmerman; Financial Secretary, Edward J. Fruiesen; Treasurer, Sam Besser; Business Agent, Alexander Bloch.

1909: President, Max Hyman; Vice-President, Joe Simpson; Recording Secretary, J. Zimmerman; Financial Secretary, Edward J. Fruiesen; Treasurer, Sam Besser; Business Agent, Alexander Bloch.

1909: President, Jesse Greenberger; Vice-President, Nathan Baron; Recording Secretary, J. Zimmerman; Financial Secretary, Edward J. Fruiesen; Treasurer, Sam Besser; Business Agent, Alexander Bloch.

- 1910: Same as above.
- 1910: President, Isadore Epstein; Vice-President, Abe Janow; Recording Secretary, Samuel Martin; Financial Secretary, Edward J. Fruiesen; Treasurer, Sam Besser; Business Agent, Jesse Cohen.
- 1911: President, Michael Ondusko; Vice-President, Max Cohen; Recording Secretary, Phil Weiss; Financial Secretary, Edward J. Fruiesen; Treasurer, Sam Besser; Business Agents, Jesse Cohen and Isadore Epstein.
- 1911: President, John C. Ryan; Vice-President, Joseph Herman; Recording Secretary, Henry I. Singer; Financial Secretary, Edward J. Fruiesen; Treasurer, Sam Besser; Business Agents, 21st Street Office, Alexander Bloch; to the Joint Board, Isadore Epstein and Jesse Cohen.
- 1912: President, John C. Ryan; Vice-President, Max Gorenstein; Recording Secretary, Henry Singer; Financial Secretary, Edward J. Fruiesen; Treasurer, Sam Besser; Business Agents, 21st Street Office, Jesse Cohen; to the Joint Board, Isadore Epstein and Max Stern.
- 1912: President, John C. Ryan; Vice-President, Charles Ubelhor; Recording Secretary, Henry Singer; Financial Secretary, Edward J. Fruiesen; Treasurer, Sam Besser; Business Agent, 21st Street Office, Jesse Cohen; Assistants, by appointment, Samuel Martin and Max Stern.
- 1913: President, Jesse Greenberger; Vice-President, Nathan Ross; Recording Secretary, Henry Singer; Financial Secretary, Edward J. Fruiesen; Treasurer, Sam Besser; Business Agent, Samuel Martin; Assistants, Max Stern and Nathon Baron.
- 1913: President, Jesse Greenberger; Vice-President, Nathan Ross; Recording Secretary, Simon Bloch; Financial Secretary, Edward J. Fruiesen; Business Agent, Samuel Martin; Assistants, Henry Singer, Nathon Baron, Charles Beaver, Max Stern, Louis Rosenberg and Julius Bender. Editor of *The Ladies' Garment Cutter*, Isadore Epstein.
- 1914: President and Editor of *The Ladies' Garment Cutter*, Elmer Rosenberg; Vice-President, Max Gorenstein; Recording Secretary, Simon Bloch; Financial Secretary, Edward J. Fruiesen; Treasurer, Sam Besser; Business Manager, Jesse Cohen.
- 1914: Same as above.
- 1915: President, John C. Ryan; Editor of *The Ladies' Garment Cutter*, Elmer Rosenberg; Vice-President, Max Gollin; Record-

ing Secretary, Simon Bloch; Financial Secretary, Edward J. Fruiesen; Treasurer, Sam Besser; Business Manager, Jesse Cohen.

1915: Same as above.

1916: President, Alexander Bloch; Editor of *The Ladies' Garment Cutter*, Elmer Rosenberg; Vice-President, Hyman Orlean; Recording Secretary, Joseph R. Scheftel; Financial Secretary, Edward J. Fruiesen; Treasurer, Sam Besser; Business Manager, Jesse Cohen.

1916: President, Alexander Bloch; Editor of *The Ladies' Garment Cutter*, Elmer Rosenberg; Vice-President, Hyman Orlean; Recording Secretary, Sam B. Shenker; Financial Secretary, Edward J. Fruiesen; Treasurer, Sam Besser; Business Manager, Jesse Cohen.

1917: President, Samuel Martin; Secretary-Editor, Elmer Rosenberg; Vice-President, Max Margulies; Financial Secretary, Edward J. Fruiesen; Secretary Executive Board, Isadore Epstein; Manager of the Cloak and Suit Division, Jesse Cohen; Manager Waist and Dress Division, Max Gollin; Manager Miscellaneous Division, Charles Nagel. Rosenberg resigned in April and President Martin appointed Sam B. Shenker as Secretary-Editor.

1917: President, John C. Ryan; Secretary-Editor, Sam B. Shenker; Vice-President, Harry Blum; Financial Secretary, Edward J. Fruiesen; Secretary Executive Board, Isadore Epstein; Manager of Cloak and Suit Division, Harry Goldstein; Manager of Waist and Dress Division, Charles Stein; Manager of Miscellaneous Division, Charles Nagel.

1918: President, Harry Berlin; Secretary-Editor, Sam B. Shenker; Vice-President, Benjamin Sachs, Financial Secretary-Treasurer, Julius Samuels; Secretary Executive Board, Isadore Epstein; Manager of Cloak and Suit Division, Max Gorenstein; Manager Waist and Dress Division, Joseph Fish; Manager of Miscellaneous Division, Charles Nagel.

1918: President, Harry Berlin; Secretary-Editor, Sam B. Shenker; Vice-President, Ig. Fischner; Financial Secretary-Treasurer, Julius Samuels; Secretary Executive Board, Isadore Epstein; Manager Cloak and Suit Division, Max Gorenstein; Manager Waist and Dress Division, Israel Lewin; Manager Miscellaneous Division, Charles Nagel.

ANNUAL ELECTIONS

- 1919: President, Harry Berlin; Secretary-Editor, Sam B. Shenker; Vice-President, Nathan Saperstein; Financial Secretary-Treasurer, Julius Samuels; Secretary Executive Board, Elmer Rosenberg; Manager Cloak and Suit Division, Max Gorenstein; Manager Waist and Dress Division, Israel Lewin; Manager Miscellaneous Division, Charles Nagel.
- 1920: President, Sidney Rothenberg; Vice-President, David Dubinsky; Financial Secretary, Julius Samuels; Manager Cloak and Suit Division, Max Gorenstein; Manager Waist and Dress Division, Sam B. Shenker; Manager Miscellaneous Division, Sam Perlmutter.
- 1921: President, David Dubinsky; Vice-President, Julius Levin; General Secretary, Israel Lewin; Secretary-Treasurer, Joseph Fish; Manager Cloak and Suit Division, Sam Perlmutter; Manager Waist and Dress Division, Sam B. Shenker; Manager Miscellaneous Division, Joseph Weinstein.
- 1922: President, Sam Perlmutter; Vice-President, Max Stoller; General Secretary, Joseph Fish; General Manager, David Dubinsky; Business Agent, Sam B. Shenker.
- 1923: President, Philip Ansel; Vice-President, Maurice W. Jacobs; General Manager, David Dubinsky; General Secretary, Joseph Fish; Business Agent, Sam B. Shenker.
- 1924: Same as above.
- 1925: President, Philip Ansel; Vice-President, Maurice W. Jacobs; Manager-Secretary, David Dubinsky; Business Agent, Sam B. Shenker.
- 1926: President, Philip Ansel; Vice-President, Harry Shapiro; Manager-Secretary, David Dubinsky; Business Agent, Sam B. Shenker.
- 1927: President, Maurice W. Jacobs; Vice-President, Harry Shapiro; Manager-Secretary, David Dubinsky; Assistant Manager, Sam B. Shenker.

Business Agents to the Joint Board, Isadore Nagler, Samuel Perlmutter, Benjamin Sachs, David Fruhling, Jacob Fleisher and Philip Hansel.

The following served as business agents at various times, some of them directly from the office of Local 10, and some, after affiliation with the Joint Board, served from the Joint Board office, including Edward Fine, Max Stern, Charles

Beaver, Sidney Beaver, Harry Goldstein, Louis Rosenberg, Julius Bender, Max Gorenstein, Meyer Scharp, Max Margulies, Louis Lipschitz, Joseph Blumenthal, Charles Stein, Joseph Fish, Israel Lewin, Albert Lazarus, Adolph Sonen, Sidney Rottenberg, Emil Wilder, Max B. Gollin, David Perlman, Max Israels, Joseph Weinstein, M. Oldvis and Arthur Weinstein.

APPENDIX VIII

DUES IN LOCAL 10, 1910-1927

<i>Year</i>	<i>Per Week</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Per Week</i>
1910*	15c	1919	25c
1911	15c	1920	25-30c
1912	15c	1921	35c
1913	15c	1922	35c
1914	15c	1923	35c
1915	15c	1924	35-50c
1916	15c	1925	50c
1917	16c	1926	40c
1918	16-21	1927	40c

*Before 1910 the dues were 50 cents per month.

APPENDIX IX

MEMBERSHIP OF LOCAL 10, 1916-1926

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Number</i>
1916*	5021	1922	3883
1917	5320	1923	4030
1918	5100	1924	4149
1919	4952	1925	4057
1920	4550	1926**	3440
1921	4360		

*The records before 1916 are incomplete.

**Due to the prolonged strike in 1926 many members were unable to pay dues. The table is based upon the purchase of due stamps each year by the members. The reader will note the decline in

membership since 1916 of a little over a thousand, an average decline of about 140 per year for the entire period. The decline has been general for the unions in New York. The membership in the cloak industry decreased from about 50,000 in 1910-1912 to about 35,000 at present, which is due to the methods of production and improved machinery and the cutters have shared the decline but in a smaller ratio. Another factor to account for this is that the white goods, wrapper and kimono industries (Miscellaneous Branch) were at their peak in the period 1913-1918 while there has been a decline of union shops in these industries so that the Miscellaneous Branch has about 50 per cent less members than in the period cited above.

APPENDIX X

EVOLUTION OF CUTTERS' UNIONS IN THE LADIES' GARMENT INDUSTRY IN NEW YORK CITY, 1884—1927

GOTHAM KNIFE CUTTERS' ASSOCIATION
MIXED LOCAL CHARTERED BY K.O.F.L. IN 1884
AS LOCAL ASSEMBLY 3038. CHARTERED
BY THE INTERNATIONAL IN 1902 AS LOCAL 16
MERGED WITH LOCAL 10 IN THE YEAR 1906

UNITED CLOAK AND SUIT CUTTERS' ASS'N
CHARTERED BY GOTHAM KNIFE CUTTERS IN
1886. JOINED UNITED GARMENT WORKERS IN 1894.
DISAPPEARED IN 1895, REORGANIZED IN 1901,
AND GRANTED CHARTER BY INTERNATIONAL
IN 1902 AS LOCAL 6

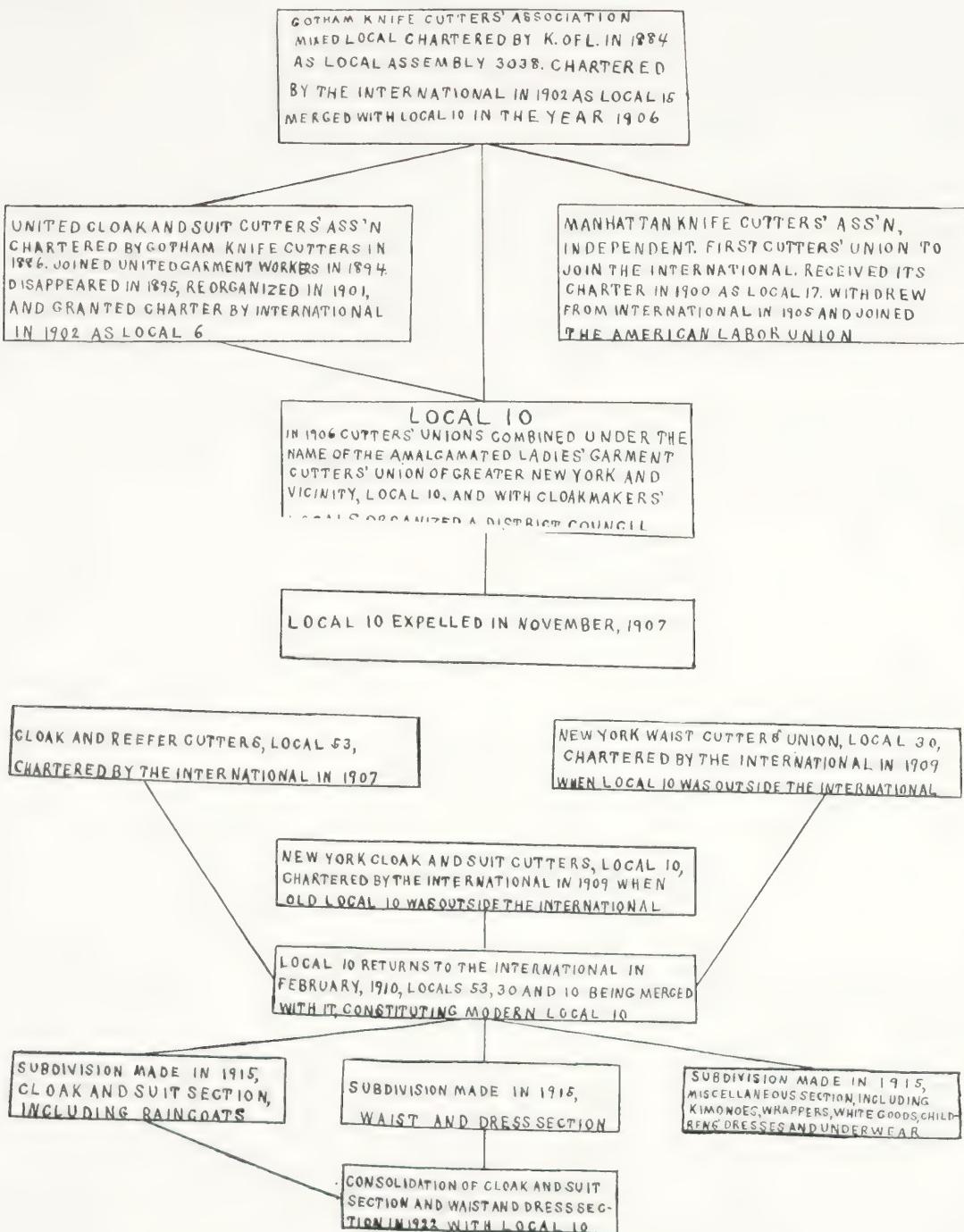
MANHATTAN KNIFE CUTTERS' ASS'N,
INDEPENDENT. FIRST CUTTERS' UNION TO
JOIN THE INTERNATIONAL. RECEIVED ITS
CHARTER IN 1900 AS LOCAL 17. WITH DREW
FROM INTERNATIONAL IN 1906 AND JOINED
THE AMERICAN LABOR UNION

LOCAL 10
IN 1906 CUTTERS' UNIONS COMBINED UNDER THE
NAME OF THE AMALGAMATED LADIES' GARMENT
CUTTERS' UNION OF GREATER NEW YORK AND
VICINITY, LOCAL 10, AND WITH CLOAKMAKERS'
LOCAL 20, AND UNDER A DIFFERENT
NAME.

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APPENDIX X

EVOLUTION OF CUTTERS' UNIONS IN THE LADIES' GARMENT INDUSTRY IN NEW YORK CITY, 1884-1927



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OFFICE AND CLERICAL STAFF OF LOCAL 10

ERRATA—Because of rush in preparing the final pages for the press a number of errors and omissions appear in the text. In the seventh line of the author's Foreword the word "pawning" appears. It should read "poring." In Appendix I, table on Minimum Wage Scales, the reader should note the following corrections: the minimum wage in the cloak trade for 1918 should read \$35.00 instead of \$31.00; in the dress trade, same year, \$35.00 instead of \$29.00; in 1920 \$44.00 instead of \$38.00 We regret that the chapter headings for chapters IV and V also are transposed. Acknowledgment is also due to Mr. Herman Volk for his aid in preparing the financial tables in cooperation with Mr. Nathan F. Woolf.

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